233 the season usually coincides with lent, when milk, as an animal food, is prohibited to the Coptic Amhara, anyway. Sometimes a wooden trough ("gända") is made out of a tree trunk, and after the cows have drunk, the sheep are permitted to use it. Milking is done in a very tightly woven reed container ("gerära") "waterproofed" by smoking (then called "qwacha" or "chocho").

233 423 691 Sometimes a large extended family will try to enclose a reserved pasturage for itself, by means of rock markers, within a "bota" that had been general pasturage. This almost invariably leads to litigation, but it is not rare in districts where landholding Amhara families of long residence feel very attached to a particular territory, e.g. in hamlets near Gondar (Awura, Addis Alam vicinity, Lidäta) and in the Menz district of Shoa.

231 The cattle of the Amhara is the humped variety (Bos Indicus, or, Zebu), which has apparently replaced the earlier cattle of Ethiopia, the unhumped Bos Primigenius.[61]

The hump of the oxen is much prized, and they are bred for it, as well as for strength in plow-pulling, but there is no breeding to obtain good milkers. The predominant attitude is that of agriculturists, not of pastoralists. The hump of the ox is utilized in plowing, to keep the yoke from slipping off; in fact, in lowlands where horses are occasionally used for plowing, an artificial hump of straw, reeds, etc., is made to hold the customary yoke. The hump is also a choice bit for eating, "shänya 251 262 läjegena" -- hump to the brave (warrior), still served to

61. Bettini, T. M.: Die Rindzucht in Italienisch - Ostafrika. Koloniale Volkerkunde, Wien, 1944.

423 It is still tremendously difficult to make an accu-
435 rate and reliable survey of "capital" and expenditures--due to concealment of property for fear of taxes. As for the value of their own land, this cannot even be estimated by observation, for not even the owners know the value of their own land. For fear of alienation, and possible higher taxes on land found to be more fertile than declared, they actually do not want to know. Most Amhara land is not even measured, and most have no clear titles, except by local "custom". The value of the tuqul hut cannot be estimated since it is not a cash item and utilizes only the raw products of nature. The same is true of utensils and equipment. Even the plowpoint is bartered rather than purchased.

C. Dietary habits

252
262 The diet in general is low in proteins and vitamins, but otherwise not inadequate.[64]

The mainstay of the Amhara is a round, thin, limp, slightly sour bread "enjara", made largely from tyeff grain. After the grain has been handground by the housewife, she mixes the flour with water and lets it stand about three days. Then she pours the thickish liquid on a clay plate (called "meted") about 2 feet in diameter, covers it with a high lid of tight reeds or clay which leaves much air space. The bread is thus baked for about four minutes on top of the triangular stone hearth. The result is a leavened, spongy-surfaced but flat-bottomed limp bread about 1/4 inch thick, and about 2 feet in diameter. The meat-curry is

64. Simmons, et al, Global Epidemiology, 1951. p.64.

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178 is more affected because of orders sent with increasing rapidity and urgency from the central government at Addis Ababa. Sometimes the central government itself gives conservative lip service to some old structure, while quietly modernizing the function.

1. Land Tenure

A. Political Aspects of the Old Tradition:

631 For many centuries Abyssinia was a confederation of states governed by princes, who recognized the superiority of one of them--the "king of kings"; except for occasional centralization of power in the hands of a particular monarch. Only in very recent times, since the late 19th century, does centralization seem to have developed with greater permanency.

631 423 As a result of this social structure, every subject is in some way a functionary of the ruling power. This may infringe on his private property at any time, and he is bound to various labors and obligations. In principle, all land is considered the ultimate property of the power ruling at the top of the social pyramid.

423 All land tenure is therefore considered subject to the final approval of the "king of kings". This [671] principle was recognized in the ancient law code "Fetha Negast", which, however, formally recognized the principle of private land property, to be expropriated only in case of rebellion. Private land property was further reaffirmed by clause 9 of the Penal Code of 1930, and

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423 the Constitutions of 1931 and 1955.

The two basic forms of land tenure are called "rest" and "gult". "Rest" comes as close to private property, particularly agricultural real estate, as is possible under these circumstances. It is inheritable, and in principle authorities are not to interfere in the enjoyment of it except in case of rebellion or in case there are no heirs. Most land of this type is found in the old Amhara provinces. "Gult" is land controlled by the governing power, which concedes temporary title to officers of the state, in lieu of salary, particularly to military officers and soldier veterans. Resident peasants who occupy and work the land are usually passed on with this grant (resembling some of the nature of a medieval European fief, or a Spanish encomienda), particularly since the grant is usually continued to the following generations for equal services. These services vary in regions, details, peacetime, wartime, etc., but may include taxes, deliveries of produce, personal services to feudal lords, supplies of grain, charcoal and incense to parish churches, conducting own mules as pack animals during military expeditions, feeding travellers who are "guests of the king", and in general carrying out any new obligation the feudal lord of the region has promised the king.

On the other hand, for every one of these services the "gultenna" could claim land, on the principle that for every function there ought to be a rewarding piece of land. This land was then given the name of the function.

566
[423] At the bottom of the social pyramid of land tenure was the "gabbar", the peasant, whose status resembled that of the medieval European serf. In the final step of passing tasks along, he was responsible for carrying them out, though he could shift some manual labor to the slaves under his constant supervision. The gabbar owed regular statute-labor (called "kudād" or "hudād", literally painful labor), resembling the medieval European corvee, and could also be called out for any special labor. At any moment, authority could decree that a bridge was to be built, a church to be constructed or repaired, at an appointed time and place. Thereupon every gabbar would have to appear, carrying his own tools, to work under the direction os the feudal officer, governor, or his lieutenants ("mislanē"). Heavy fines punished failure to appear for this labor.

It is peculiar, perhaps, how this system was internalized by the gabbar. If he was not on good enough terms with his neighbors to call on them for mutual aid, e.g. in housebuilding or harvesting, perhaps due to a quarrel between kin units, he could demand such aid by appealing to the "cheqa shum" (village headman) or governor's lieutenants, who would then proclaim the work as an official
[689] task. The penalty for failure to appear, however, was milder; the offender was sentenced to donate a great feast to all the other participants.

566
794 Another noteworthy traditional task emphasized the feudal structure of the church. A priest in charge of periodic services, the "master of the chant", could de-

B. Private Property - "rest".

423 "Rest", at least since the days of the Fetha Nägäst and probably earlier, is a form of freehold, with rights and privileges resembling those of a medieval European entail. It is inherited. It is normally free from any statute-labor, It can be expropriated only for rebellion, or certain segments for a public utility such as roadways. The owner has to pay land taxes and a tithe on produce, but can and does pass them on to his tenant.

423 614 The most important factor regarding "rest" is that it is usually owned by a kinship group, predominantly the patrilineal-patrilocal kin. Land of such a kin group is often referred to as "yäwel märet" (lit. partnership land), and this has led some foreign observers mistakenly to regard Amhara land tenure as communal property. It is that only in a very restricted sense. An individual whose kin have died becomes sole proprietor. At the other extreme, if the next generation has become too numerous, a process of "sharing out" can take place, in which new kinship units "bud off" after the death of a patriarch.

Every few years the elders of a patrilocal kin group allocate land to individuals and to biological (nuclear) families, according to their manpower and to their needs. A father, on the marriage of his son, allocates him some of the kin's "rest" land that he individually holds at the time, so that the son can enjoy the produce of his own labors. In some ways this form

423 614 of land settlement resembles the Middle Eastern (Arab) "musha's" land tenure.

No individual or nuclear family can sell, or otherwise alienate, "rest" land belonging to the kin group. He may ask them for permission to do so, but in Amhara provinces this is usually refused. On the other hand, if he moves to a different province (which has happened particularly since Menelik's borderland conquests), his kinfolk will hold his claim in trust so that a returning grandson can claim his rights in full. He can even do this, in some cases of particularly strong and proud families, if the inheritance is on his mother's side.

It is interesting that the Biblical principle of the kinsman-redeemer of the land is still in force among the Amhara, in the same spirit. Cases of this kind have arisen increasingly in the past decade, because of the emperor's efforts to settle landless squatters, who have worked fallow land and have paid tithe for several years. If such formerly fallow land belonged to "rest" kin groups, they try to evict the squatters through legal(or sometimes illegal) means, thus "redeeming the land" for the kin group.

423 428 614 For purposes of inheritance, landholding kin usually include all descendants to the "fourth house", i.e. the great-grandsons. After that, disputes usually arise. If no kin survives-- a very rare occurrence--the partners of the "mahabber" sodality to which the deceased belonged, have a final claim, before the land reverts to the regional authority. Affinal relations, except for the mate who shares equally with children of the deceased, are not considred kin for purposes of inheritance of land. If there are no children, the wife has user claims up to half the estate, which would have been her portion in case of divorce. [586]

423 428 614 have been her portion in case of divorce. If the deceased left an infant, the widow is expected to remain with the kin group of the deceased until the child is reared to adulthood. Then she may leave, taking movable belongings that are her share, but, of course, foregoing any claims on real estate. The same procedure is followed in case of her marriage again.

[848] Illegitimate sons, including children of ex-slave concubines, also have the right to inheri their share of "rest", unless the presumed father has publicly rejected them as offspring. Girls who leave the kin group upon marriage, have claims only on movable property, not land. However, if the bridegroom settles on land belonging to the bride's kin, as happens in a minority of cases, the elders will allocate him land, and the male offspring will share in the inheritace.

[852] Allocations of land by the elders to the various biological families used to be made into great events and festivities particularly for the children. This was the only time children were singled out for attention, in this adult-centered culture. Thus the purpose of firmly impressing the event on their minds, to be always remembered and defended in the future, was achieved. In the absence of written legal titles, this procedure was necessary, and is still followed in some rural districts.

C. Semi-private Real Estate--"gult".

423 566 For many centuries past, land, with the peasants occupying it, has been assigned to feudal officers and soldiers, similar to fiefs of medieval Europe. These "gult" lands also resemble in principle the "miri" state lands of

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423 the Middle East; particularly of the Ottoman empire, where
566 they were also refered to as "çiftliks" (peasant estates that had passed into the possession of soldiers, "sipahi", who in turn constituted fiefs assigned to officers as personal estates.[70]

423 The process which created "gult" land can be clear-
566 ly observed inthe history of Abyssinia toward the end
701 of the 19th century. Soldiers and officers in the armies of Menilek II were assigned conquered Galla lands in lieu of salary. They were free from land tax, but obliged to pay "asrat" (tithe) on produce, which tax they of course passed on to the Galla "gabbar". The sons of these veterans usually assumed the same military responsibilities when they came of age, so that the lands passed on to them on the same terms. These lands were referred to as "mädariya" lands, and

70. Inalcik, Halil: Land Problems in Turkish History. (in) Muslim World, July 1955, pp. 221-2.

423 566 701 the plots carried names adsociating them with the specific services owed by the holder of the homestead:

"land for the rifleman" (infantry)

"land for the guard of prisoners" (military police)

"land for the bearer of the tent" (standard bearer)

"land for the shield-bearer" (bodyguard)

"land for the forager" (quartermaster)

"land for the left flank" (i.e. platoon attacking on the left column); etc.

The "gultenna" homesteader was always on call for a new military campaign. His land was regarded as his for enjoyment of produce only, like land allocated by a father to his son upon marriage. The size of "gult" land could vary from one gasha (usually about 50 acres) for a soldier-veteran of long service, to as much as 1000 gasha for a high officer of feudal nobility. The latter could, and usually did, set aside part of his "gult" land as endowment for a monastery or church, and the gabbar on such land passed to the control of the church.

There is very little "gult" land in old-Amhara provinces dating from this period of Menelik II. If found there, it is usually older, since his conquests were farther south, southwest and southeast.

On his long and distant campaigns, Menelik II thus found his supply lines assured, for the "gultenna" was obliged to feed passing armies and to aid the military foragers. He had also to act as host to any passing "negadras" (treasurer, customs agent) of Menelik during intervals of peace.

423 566 701 If these interludes of peace lengthened greatly, the feudal knight ("färäsenya") would often conclude a contract with his "gulteñña", which gave both parties some security in what they could expect of each other in services and privileges. This contract usually took the form of "siso" (lit. one-third). The "gulteñña" thus became a sharecropper, paying 1/3 of his produce to the feudal lord after each harvest, working statute-labor for him one day in three, making his team of oxen available on a basis of one day in three, Sometimes the "gulteñña" thus became a sharecropper and little better off than the "gabbar", especially if no war service interrupted the arrangement for many years. Though he could pass on much of the labor to his own gabbars, he himself sometimes became so debt-ridden to the feudal landlord above him that his status resembled that of a Mexican peon. "Siso" contracts were rare in Shoa, where the "gulteñña" was frequently called to war, and his status as honorable and free soldier-veteran thus never faded away.

The fortunes of war ruled the life of the "gulteñña" much more than the owner of "rest" property. For if the Ras (feudal top nobility) of his province, under whom the gulteñña was fighting, lost in a war or in a rebellion, the gulteñña found himself under a newly-appointed Ras who might ignore customary relaxation of burdens, who might even confiscate the "gult" lands and make the homesteaders "gabbar" serfs, leaving them only the alternative of escaping into the bush. Outside of Shoa, (where fertile land is more expensive and more closely guarded), the

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423 "gultenña" and his family might try to become squatters,
566 "chesanña", on someone's fallow land, and risk being cha-
701 sed away by a kin unit claiming that territory. Or, permitted to remain on his old lands, a "gultenña" might suddenly find that the new feudal lord of the province was enclosing ("kelkel", declared forbidden) land formerly used as pasturage or for agriculture, to give to his own successful soldier veterans, and exacting quotas of oxen, mules and honey from the former "gultenña".

178 As long as the "gabbar" system was still in full
423 force, the "gultenña" at least had someone to exploit in turn, to ease his own burdens. Now that the present emperor has declared the "gabbar" system ended (though much of it survives), even this relief is passing. Furthermore, the new army is salaried, so that the basic function of the "gult" system has already disappeared. The only hope the sons of "gultennas" have is to have their lands declared "rest", private property, for otherwise they will become landless. This means that they must work the land themselves and pay tithe on the produce; otherwise squatters can alienate it from them.

D. Endowed Lands -- "rest-gult".

423 The many variations of regional "rest"and "gult" lands sometimes crystallize to a combination type referred to as "rest-gult".

423 Such types of land tenure arose in the past when a king awarded land for personal service, or in gratitude, as "gult" land, without specifying the conditions under which such land might pass to the heirs of the recipient.

423 794 Land donated to the church, in areas far from a monastery or parish that could easily administer it, sometimes belong in this category. In gratitude for victory, a king would sometimes establish ecclesiastical fiefs, "rim", for the support of officiating priests and boy deacons. The most famous endowment of this kind occurred in 1270 A.D., when archbishop Täklä Haymanot received 1/3 of the land of Abyssinia from the "Solomonic Dynasty" he had helped to restore. The archbishop immediately founded monasteries to administer the property and to supervise the "gabbar on it. Priests and monks since [793] then have served in functions similar to chaplains, and have carried the "tabot" representing the sacred ark, into battles, much like the priests of the ancient Israelites. Endowments have continued to add land to the church, "mäsqäl märet" (lit. lands of the cross), and a priest is usually sent to act as local administrator, "aläqa" (lit, chief). He also supervises the functioning of a church built on land not given to the church, and often acts as if the surrounding land were "gult" land belonging to the church.

The moral power of the church in many localities is so strong that the borderlines between "rest" and "gult" may become hazy. Aging persons often try to

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423 794 donate some plots to the church as "s̈amonanya", to have masses read for their souls after their deaths. Widows, who often take vows as nuns, try to endow the church if they can. Sometimes, "gultenn̈as" threatened with expropriation, sought the protection of the church, so that they could remain on their lands. Sometimes parish priests 423 793 practice nepotism by inviting their nephews or other kinsmen to settle on endowed land surrounding the parish church, without paying rent or performing heavy labors. In return, this arrangement serves the local priests as life insurance and income-insurance, for they will always be certain of supplies of produce, beer, meat, incense, clothing, etc., from their grateful kinfolk, for themselves and their offspring.

The local priest then also acts as patron of his kinfolk against the regional administration, interceding for them when they become involved in litigation, acts as their "guarantor" ("was") when they apply for jobs or seek more land from the governor or neighboring landlord. This nepotism actually seems on the increase, since the present emperor abrogated the feudal rights of all church lands in 1942 (though reinstituting some in exchange for services such as education, a few years later). Now that the church has lost the right to charge feudal rent, parish priests are more eager than ever to have kinfolk settle around them, to avoid dependence on payment from parents whose boys are enrolled in the church school.

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E. Some Regional Variations, in Amhara provinces.

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The sharpest regional variations are between the old-Abyssinian, Coptic north, and the areas conquered by Menelik II to the south. But variations exist to considerable degree among the northern provinces also.

Shoa, particularly the old-Amhara sections, enjoyed many exemptions from burdens which have been mentioned. "Siso" peonage was almost non-existent, and "gultennas" were involved in warfare so much that they enjoyed a maximum of "gult" exemptions. In the past they felt as secure in their tenure as "restenyas". The highest Amhara nobility came from the Shoa districts of "Manz" and "Wanchit", where their lands had actually been "rest" property for centuries. However, in much of Shoa the old kinship holdings had broken up in consequence of the Galla invasion prior to the 19th century. When Menelik II reconquered these areas they became "gult" though under most favorable conditions for "gultennas".

In Gojjam and Begemdir most of the land remained "rest", since Galla invasions did not reach that far to any great extent. This land has remained unmeasured to this day, despite the efforts of the present emperor to ascertain titles to land, replace traditional "status" with "contract", and provide for fixity of tenure. Provincial Amhara resistence to this change is still strong, and the residents have been permitted to continue to pay the low land taxes of 1927 for the time being. In Gojjam, during the rule of the provincial dynasty of Ras Hailu,

184 which ended with his unsuccessful rebellion of 1929,
423 much land was "rest-gult", and there were many kinds of tax exemptions for heirs of veterans, who often paid only the tithe on grain and a small tax on cattle.

In Begemdir province (capital: Gondar), most of the land also remains unmeasured, for the same reason. Much of the land is "rest" owned by kin groups who guard it jealously against alienation; and the old church lands are are regarded as "rest". In the southwestern, lower, section of Gondar town and some nearby rural land, "rest" is owned by Ethiopian Muslims, mostly traders, who purchased it from the church, long ago. In scattered rural areas some families of ethnic specialists like the Falasha smiths own land considered "rest-gult", given to their ancestors in reward for services rendered Menelik's armies in the 19th century. This process has been discontinued (artisans are now in business for themselves and are supposed to pay a trade tax to the central government), and most Falashas live under very uncertain terms of tenure, paying tithe and other taxes, which worries the Amhara claimants to this territory.

F. Crown Lands and Efforts to Centralize Land Tenure.

423
656 In the old tradition of land tenure, the king held some very personal land, inherited or conquered, for the support of the royal household, "mēd-bēt". He added to it by confiscating land of unsuccessful feudal rebels.

423 He could do with "mād-bēt" lands as he pleased, without
656 interference from kin groups, the church, or other local-feudal dynasties.

654 Thus the present emperor, when he was still merely
656 regent, and a young man in his twenties, began his pro-
423 gram of modernization and centralization in his own "mad-bet" in Harar province. He organized the coffee-growing of that area as a cash crop for export, and, more significantly, reduced the burdens on the "gabbar", improved security of tenure, appointed supervisors to see that matters would not slip back, and instructed them to report to him as the central power. He also set up elementary schools in several locations. At regular intervals he toured his lands personally. As a result, "gabbar" from neighboring feudal estates were eager to have the protection of his "mād-bēt".

423 These efforts were a departure from the traditional
656 pattern of high feudal nobles on their "mād-bēt" (though, on the other hand, no one could criticize him for doing as he pleased on his own "household land"). The others appointed trustees, "täwälaj", usually 12, to administer their land, while they remained absentee landlords at the court of the "king of kings". These trustees were u usually appointed from patriarchal elders and lowest nobility, and were responsible for the support of the parish churches of their area, with priest, deacons, däbtära (scribe-choristers), etc.

423 In the traditional pattern there was another means
651 of exercising some central control, through the collection

423 of land taxes and tithe, provided these were not entirely
651 claimed by powerful local feudal nobility or the church. These tax-collectors, who often lived dangerously, were given land as reward for services; this land was called "mälkäña" land. They also acted as overseers of stature-labor, "hudäd". They were usually free from both land tax and tithe on their own territory, and, although their sons could inherit the job and the land that went with it, their security of tenure was even weaker than that of the "gultenña". Partly this was due to the ever-shifting power factors, for, when the central power was weak or distracted by a distant war, the tax-collector might find himself working as a provincial functionary, intermediate between the cheqa shum (headman) and the provincial feudal lords.

423 When central power was greatly strengthened in
656 the days of Menelik II, there was a considerable increase in "malkana" lands. This was particularly the case in lands he had conquered from the Galla landlords ("balbat"). He expropriated 3/4 of their lands for distribution among his military veterans, but in consolation granted the balbats the remaining 1/4 as "mälkäña" land. This freed them from taxes, enabled them to pass their remaining landholdings on to their sons, and turned them into loyal subjects of the central power which alone could protect their tenure from future expropriation. The outcome of this amazingly Solomonic solution of an age-old problem of land tenure in a feudal country has turned the Galla balbats today into the most reliable

423
656 supporters of the central government.

The descendants of these balbats, now educated in
423 the high schools of Addis Ababa, are being sent into even
447 the old-Amhara provinces at present, by Emperor Haile
651 Selassie, to act as salaried collectors for the central treasury ("Gemja-Bet") (so that the function of the former malkana has again come full circle, though the term is no longer used for the office). In fact, the new centralized tax-gathering has ended the office of the old, provincial "mälkäña", and they, much like the "gultäñña", can only hope to have their lands affirmed as "rest". This they can hope to achieve only if they work the lands themselves and pay tithe on produce, otherwise it may be lost to squatters. Their final security of tenure, by contract instead of vague status (they have lost the latter), will come only when the lands are measured and modern titles issued, which has not yet happened in the old-Amhara areas that resist this. The non-resistant Galla balbats of Shoa province are thus more secure in tenure, and will remain so as long as the central government is strong.

423 Measurement of land is called, traditionally, "throw-
804 ing the rope" ("yase gämäd"). This rope may be made of cordage, plant fibers, traditionally 40 elbow lengths long. In northern districts it is sometimes made of plaited oxhide, and called "qälad".

423 The "rope was thrown" widely in Galla lands conquered by Menelik II, Three-quarters of these lands were then divided into gashas of 80-100 acres each, and

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423 the peasants occupying them were allocated as "gabbar" to soldiers and officers. A soldier-veteran who had family might have received 2 to 5 families "gabbar"; officers 7 to 10, district commanders 30 and more "gabbar" families, governors hundreds of gabbar. From the gabbar's point of view, this constituted little change in his lot, for he had served the Galla balbat in similar ways. Gabbar were also allocated to the Coptic churches built on the new territories. Menelik II regarded these new parishes and buildings as permanent outposts of Amhara society in the Galla south.

423
651 The first emperor to strengthen central power, in modern times, and to begin land reforms, was Emperor Theodore. In the 1850's and 1860's he instituted a new office, still retained. This was the appointment of trusted lieutenants, "mislanē", to act as tax-collectors, in place of the uncertain "malkana" who were always being subdued by regional feudal powers. He appointed as "mislanē" persons from different regions, who would own no fealty to local lords, and could be relied upon to owe personal loyalty directly to the central power that had appointed them. This was the first type of officer not rewarded by land grants, but receiving salary out of the taxes he had collected. At present, a century later, the office of "mislanē" is little changed, except that he is now directly responsible to the provincial governor who is himself an appointee of the Emperor and who is frequently shifted to another province to prevent him from growing local roots.

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G. Present Holdings and Problems of Amhara Peasants of Begemdir Province.

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Most of the Amhara peasants of Begemdir (and other provinces) live much as their ancestors have lived for centuries. They subsist largely on the products of their lands, needing relatively few gooda and services from outside the province. They do not care for profit and loss accounting. Their social organization is built on visible human relationships. They do not welcome modern bookkeeping and registration, particularly with regard to land tenure, which the modern central government is gradually attempting to foist on them; adding, to the proud provincial Amhara mind, insult to disturbance by doing it through "Galla" clerks from Shoa province.

423

The basic land unit to which the Amhara peasant of Begemdir refers in transactions, is the "qada", usually a little less than half an acre. The average "gasha" may contain as many as 150 "qada", varying with the relative fertility of the soil. Several patrilocal hamlets, constituting a "mandar" (villageship) and supervised by one cheqa shum (headman), may control as many as 10 gashas, (about 500 acres.). The average farmer, supporting his family of procreation and an aged parent and aunt, may control, on the average, about 50 qada (about 20 acres), half of which he may leave fallow at any given time.

423 The richest farmer in the rural vicinity of Gondar,
427 a member of the Qemant (Cushitic-speaking) ethnic group, owns 8 gasha (about 400 acres), which is considered fabulous wealth by his Amhara neighbors. However, with the aid of his sons and servants, he cultivates only one gasha at any given time. He parcels out the remaining 7 gasha, except for some fallow land, to landless tenant farmers, many of them ex-slaves, usually in plots no bigger than 10 qada (about 4 acres), which is considered the limit one man can plow and seed without help. The rent they pay him consists of one "madiga " of tyeff grain (about 25 kilo); payable by each. Each also pays him 1/2 madiga of barley, referred to as "qolo", tribute to his "household". His agents also collect the 10% tithe, in produce, which he is expected to pass on to the government, and the new Eth$4.- education tax. He invest part of his profits in cows for his increasing herds.

423 For purposes of taxation, of peasants, the govern-
651 ment treasury must rely on the judgment of the headman, ("qheqa shum"), who is difficult to check because the land is unmeasured and a "gasha" is a flexible concept. Therefore, his supervisor, usually the mislane, can only base a check on past, customary payments.

[602] Taxcollectors are known to be generous when deal-
423 ing with even distant kinfolk, or with priests and
651 their relatives, and to even out the receipts by pres-
653 sure on low-class ethnic minorities, justifying this by claiming that the ethnics have unstated income from their handicrafts.

423 by claiming that the ethnics have unstated income
651 from their handicrafts. Among the methods of this
663 extortion is the "initiation fee" of as much as Eth$3.- per qada, when freshly cleared from the bush. Another impressment consists of "voluntary" supplies regularly paid to the Coptic parish church in the locality, by non-Coptic ethnics. Also, the feudal landlord usually asks them for a special "pasturage fee"--as much as Eth$2.- per qada of fallow land--with the further condition that no more than two oxen (or cows) graze on each qada. Where a Coptic farmer may pay perhaps Eth$10.- tithe on his semi-fertile 50 qada, the non-Coptic farmer may be made to pay double to four times that for similar produce on an equivalent plot of land. While
[871] the new education tax is the same, the non-Coptic artisan finds it very difficult to enroll his boy in the overcrowded elementary school in the provincial capital.

423 The average "rest"-owning farmer working 10 qada
651 every year, may harvest about 50 madiga of tyeff grain,
511 selling it for Eth$150.-(In the rainy season it would bring twice that); plus 30 madiga barley, Eth$60.- plus some honey, if he has it.

If the tax-collector is his friend, his tithe may amount to as little as Eth$5 to 10, his education tax Eth$2 to 4. His land tax based on the rate of 1927 will be very low, and his pasturage, as Coptic non-artisan, free.

511 Thus he has enough for his basic needs including the purchase of a new toga (shamma) per year, and perhaps a new donkey. However, he cannot normally afford

511 prestige items of luxury, such as a mule, a fine saddle, and he would not want to "waste" his money on imported snadals. His expenses for shelter and furnishings are almost nil in terms of cash, and even a beer jar can be purchased for Eth$1.- in rural areas.

423 578 His basic needs filled with a minimum of labor, and his wants few, the "rest"-owning Amhara farmer views modern land measurement with suspicion. He fears that disputed land with vague boundaries will be declared government land and be redistributed. In the absence of written deeds; dependence on remembered local traditions and natural landmarks; and the practice of letting fallow land revert to bush to be cleared anew every few years, disputes are many at any time. Rumors from southern areas where courts have for several years now recognized tithe receipts as evidence of ownership, reinforces these fears. Alienation of any part of one's land is strongly objected to as loss of prestige and weakening of kin bonds. As a result, there is little appreciation among "rest"-holding Amhara of Begemdir for the efforts of the emperor, to replace vague "status" of land tenure with assured "contract", to have real estate deeds issued and registered, to end the tax exemptions of feudal lords and the church, to institute uniform land taxes, etc. Any general change, they feel, is bound to raise the socio-economic level of non-Coptic ethnic minorities and depress their own.

423 Several land laws were included in the Penal

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

423 Code of 1930 of the central government. "Rest" land was protected by a provision that it could not be sold without permission of the district judge. This assured that the transaction would be public, enabling the kinfolk to protest. In the provinces of Begemdir, Semyen and Gojjam, where land was considered plentiful, most land consisted of freehold "rest", which remained unsurveyed, and in practice virtually unsaleable. In Shoa province, much land formerly held by veterans and officials ("gultennas") has reverted to the government. But most "gabbar" tenants still owe the 2/3 of produce previously paid. The tenants of the descendants of "gultennas" can become owners only by purchasing the land; meanwhile their income goes to pay the rent, the tithe, etc., leaving no capital to accumulate.

423 651 Under this Code the church was still exempt from land tax on its huge holdings. The laws of 1944 abrogated this exemption, but the amendment of 1947 partially restored the right of the church to claim "voluntary contributions" locally, from recipients of benefits such as education. The law of 1944 was a victory for the resisting provincial Amhara peasants, in that it limited, temporarily, the land taxes of Begemdir, Semyen and Gojjam (also the Coptic province of Tigre) to the low rate of 1927. The tithe could continue to be on an "estimated" basis. All taxes permitted "scaling" according to fertility.

Thus the old immunities and inequalities in

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

423 [651] taxation of landholdings have been only partially swept away. Enforcement in the old-Amhara provinces is lax. The "gabbar" system, abolished by decree after the emperor's return in 1941, continues as the broad basis of land occupancy, and as a major pillar of social structure, with only little, gradual change.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

725 and left flanks.
701

Fanning out in all directions, detachments of light cavalry and foragers on foot, "fano", could destroy and plunder enemy land to do as much damage as possible while on the march. When re-encampment was ordered, the tent of the king or field commander was set up first, and the army divisions and followers, seeing this, grouped themselves accordingly and settled in their proper locations, distances, areas and relative positions. The quartermaster thereupon took over the functions of maintenance and supplies.[74]

[554] This pattern of "relative positions" and functions carried over into civilian life, and dominated land tenure, administration, law, social structure, organized religion, the life cycle, artistic expression, and a multitude of human relations.

C. Significance of the old Military Organization in Modern Change.

178 The spear, the rhinoceros shield and armies paid by land grants have now become memories of the past, [554] though recent past. Yet most of the attitudes and many of the roles that accompanied the old military organization still linger and dominate social organization.

[473] Much of the old land tenure is still little changed in the old-Amhara provinces, as has been pointed out.

74. Sadie: An Amharic Reader, 1924, pp. 86-7.

I: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

632 not far from the market. A smaller daily market for retail items would develop, so commerce proceeded even on a daily basis. A larger church school, to include some higher grades, would be set up by priests and Däbtära (scribe-choristers).

632 712 On account of the floods in the rainy season, most of this town would be on a higher level, preferably a butte overlooking a river valley from which drinking water could be brought every day. On this fertile flood plain, just below the town, there would be some grass even at the height of the dry season, so that the cows owned by urban citizens would always find some pasture. [423] On this floodplain a "commons" was set aside, which no [485] one could "enclose" for private use. It was called "addäbabay" or even "yähezb addäbabay", and served as camping place for caravans, for temporary storage space of their goods and their mules, donkeys or camels, prior to the slow climb up the butte to the Saturday market. This arrangement also had the advantage of military security for the town, protecting it from sneak attack of an enemy under guise of a caravan, which was not permitted to proceed upward into town until dawn. For the Amhara town, unlike the Muslim towns in the south, were not walled.

632 651 This arrangement also permitted the "näggadraa" the collector of duties for the central power of the province, to keep control of the merchandise entering and leaving the market.

b) Parish Organization.

423
795 In many districts of the oldAmhara provinces, the church has owned much feudal land (it was given 1/3 of the land in the 13th century). Endowments from the wills of pious persons have been adding to this.

This land, which is regarded as "rest", freehold real estate, in the traditional land tenure, is administered in divisions, called "däbber", that somewhat resemble medieaval European parishes. The population of such an area, which directly or indirectly supports the local church, through tithes, rents, services, periodic supplies, memorial gifts, etc., refers to "and däbber agär" (lit. one particular countryside) as its home district; much as an Italian refers to "mi paese".

793 The priests attached to this church (often for long periods) usually attempt to create a residential kinship unit for themselves, similar to the residential hamlets of freehold families, inviting their nephews and other young-married kin, both patrilineal and matrilineal, to settle near the church. A priest thus closely surrounded by kin becomes the local patriarch, and his personal economic future, as well as his leadership are assured. The priest locally appointed by higher church authorities ato act as administrator is the sacristan, "gäbäz", or "qes"(priest) gobäz", who is respectfully addressed and referred to as "aläqa" (lit. chief).

793
795 The number of clergy attached to an old-established local church, often includes, besides the "gobäz"

606 to be a "good wife", to do "everything right", to learn what her husband likes. If she does not obey her mother-in-law, she is criticized as "rude", and the women say that the groom will"divorce her soon".

423 596 After the marriage, and especially after she bears children, a wife is regarded as a charter member of her husband's "byet" (lit. house), his family of procreation, continuing his patrilineal kinship unit, regardless of whether they move to residence elsewhere or not. Nevertheless, it is the "byet" that is the landholding unit among most "rest"-owning Amhara, and each biological unit within it receives an allotation of land for usufruct; the limit of one able-bodied plowman is regarded as 5-10 "qada". Thus, the biological family of procreation does not own land, nor does it control it, until, with the death of elders and advancing age, it becomes the "family of orientation" to which a succeeding generation must give obedience.

596 422 Meanwhile, however, the biological family unit does own the cattle and other mobile goods with which they started their married life, and the increase therefrom. This gives them some partial economic independence.

[731] 423 166 361 When, due to war, epidemics (e.g. malaria), or famine (erosion), a "byet" decides to abandon, for the time being, the ancestral lands, and migrates to another district, it usually huddles together in one or a minimum of residential hamlets, sometimes for several generations, until times are better. Then it buds off so rapidly that soon only a few huts remain on the location of the original hamlet of refuge. Thereupon kinsmen may claim "betäa" rights of usufruct from more distant kinfolk who had remained be-

423 hind on the ancestral lands.

166 This succession of events has taken place so often in Amhara
361 history, that very few old settlements have remained on the same
[591] spot for even a century. As a result, many regional varieties of "patrilocal residence" have developed, and even "matrilocal residence" is not excluded, though most bridegrooms would shun such a fate. Also, the land tenure of the Amhara has become complex and replete with litigation, because of the amorphous definition of "byet", which sometimes emphasizes the consanguineal aspect, sometimes the residential, of kinship after marriage.

B. Problems of the Married Couple and Divorce.

586 When a couple has remained married for a number of years, people say they are "<u>läzza</u>" (lit. coagulated), stuck on each other. For divorce of a first marriage is common as the partners mature.

If her husband neglects her, wanders off, is a drunkard, or beats her too often, a woman may decide to initiate divorce proceedings. A man may do so if she is disobedient, e.g. wanders off to town without his permission.

587 If a man takes a "damoz" wife in addition to his "semanya" wife, the latter has no recourse in court. But if he takes another "semanya" wife, she can have him arrested, if she can locate him, for breaking his oath. She then angrily accuses him of doing a stupid thing, "you married one ox hump (shanna) above the other". He may be fined, but his first marriage may still remain valid. If a "semanya" wife hears that her husband has a previous wife, she often laughs, flattered, mocking the other woman by saying: "I married on top of her and not below" - for evidently, the man,

J. Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

181 the emphasis on frequency and intensity of kin relations; the dichotomy between "rustic peasant" and "great man - noble" personality (the latter constituting a culture goal; Amhara concepts of government administration; religious fundamentalism and literalness; and last, healing of "spirit ailments" outside the officially dominant religion.

181 Attachment to the land is a major preoccupation of all Amhara:
● 423 Nobles and "gabbar" serfs, men and women, old and young, priest and
571 student, even of the townspeople. The complexity of land tenure (i.e. the varieties of "rest" and "gult" land) is closely connected with the social status of the residential kin group; the life cycle of the individual is largely determined by the land tenure of his family, beginning with the very kind of education he is likely to receive. By extension, a person's secondary social group consists largely of persons inhabiting or stemming from the same "agärey" (lit. my countryside), the sub-district where his family owns land or works on it.

181 Attachment to one's kin group is nearly as strong on the in-
602 dividual's maternal side as on the paternal. The greater emphasis
[591 on the latter is largely due to the predominantly patrilocal resi-
611] dence, and on patrilineal descent. Kin visiting is a primary social duty, on both the individual's paternal and maternal sides, with equal frequency and intensity. By extension, though with lesser frequency and intensity, visiting of affinal relatives, notably the wife's parents who nearly always live in another hamlet, is considered an important social duty.

Kin feuds often last for generations, particularly between land owning ("rest" tenure) kin groups. The fear of shaming ("harerät")

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

These figures show that the gorges, together with the adjoining and intervening plateau, carry a considerably higher population than the rest of the plateau, the combined average being over 200 per square mile. The figures for population per church are also interesting. The gorges and the adjacent parts of the plateau contain no fewer than thirteen churches and they serve an average population of only some 650 souls each. On the other hand the churches of the general plateau, not counting those of Debra Berhan, which chiefly serve the townspeople, number only four. They must cater for about three times as many people each, and until recently many more for two of them are recent foundations.

The higher population of the gorge region is attributable to two causes: the greater productivity of the land there, and the historical fact, already referred to, that the Amharas were long forced to live in the gorges, and have re-emerged only in recent times. This is confirmed by the evidence of the churches which, in such numbers, are sure evidence of a long-established Christian population. The oldest ones are among those in the depths of the gorges; sites on the edges of gorges seem to be more recent. The few plateau churches are all relatively modern and bespeak the re-occupation by Amharas; two of them were indeed founded within the last fifteen years, and one as recently as 1945.

As can be seen from the map, sites chosen for dwellings are usually on the higher ground. The favourite sites, of which many examples can be seen on the sheet, are rocky ridges and the tops or upper slopes of hills and minor plateaus. A high place with an outlook, together with reasonable proximity to permanent water, seem to be the conditions sought after. Even the most elevated and exposed hill-tops are generally inhabited, whereas nobody tries to live on the plains near the main streams, which become very swampy in the rains. The ordinary family, together with its domestic animals, lives in a small, irregular cluster of round huts, which in this area are built of stone cemented with mud and carry a conical thatched roof. They are surrounded, as a rule, by a dry-stone wall, which may be shared by several households. Richer people may have an ornamental gatehouse at the main entry, with a little watchman's room over the gate; but such ostentation was not common.

Disregarding some of the Debra Berhan people, almost the entire population is engaged in farming which, here as elsewhere in Ethiopia, is the mainstay of existence. Some possess their own land; others hold their plots, in return for a proportion of the produce (but without any security of tenure), from absentee landowners. There is also a landless element, greatly increased through the disturbing influence of the Italian occupation, who hire themselves out as ploughmen and labourers. I had intended to measure some typical holdings in order to estimate the area actually required to support a family, but my time in the area was cut short and I never did so. As a very rough estimate I think that about 15–20 per cent. of the area is under cultivation in any one year, which would indicate an average per family of something like 4 acres. This does not include fallow land which, once re-grown with grass, cannot be distinguished at a glance from permanent pasture.

The most exposed parts of the plateau near Debra Berhan will grow two crops only, barley and broad beans, but a limited amount of wheat (a bearded

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: LAND TENURE AND TRIBUTE

THE GABAR

It is impossible to go any further with this discussion of provincial administration without some understanding of the Ethiopian methods of land tenure. The three strands, administration, tribute, and tenure, were closely twisted together and with them the fourth strand of military service, which we have already endeavoured to study separately. Unfortunately the whole subject is extremely complex. A few investigations have been made especially by Italian scholars, whose work has been mainly in the old Tigré province, part of which became Eritrea, but, as there are very wide varieties even within the northern provinces, seeming inconsistencies occur between the authorities.[1] The situation was at least as intricate as in early medieval England while

[1] Among the chief authorities upon this subject are:
1. P. Soleillet, *Voyages en Ethiopie*, Rouen, 1886.
2. E. de Felcourt, *L'Abyssinie*, Paris, 1911.
3. Rossini.
4. Cerulli.
5. Guèbrè Sellassié, especially Appendix xi by M. de Coppet, 'Landed Property in Shoa'.
6. A. Pollera, *Le popolazioni indigene dell'Eritrea*, Bologna, 1935.
7. de Castro, *L'Etiopia*.
8. G. P. Veroi, *Caratteri generali dell'economica dell'Impero*, Rome, 1937.
9. V. L. Grottanelli, *Missione di Studi al Lago Tana*, 2 vols., Rome, 1939.
10. J. Kalmer, 'The Return of Haile Selassié', *Contemporary Review*, vol. 159, pp. 290–4.
11. L. Meri, *Problema fondiario*, Rivista delle Colonie, Rome, 1937.
(For nos. 3, 4, and 5, see list of abbreviated references.)
In addition to these modern authors who give special consideration to land tenure, nearly all the travellers have something to say of the subject. While use has been made of these authorities, some of the information in this and the next chapter is based upon evidence collected directly from Ethiopians by F. de Halpert.

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here there is no Domesday Book to give a clear point of departure and none of the successive unravellings of generations of scholars to help the inquirer. Any attempt at the simplification of the evidence must to some extent be a distortion.

Two preliminary generalizations may help to clarify the picture.

Firstly it is important to remember that in Ethiopia, as in all economically backward countries where industry is negligible, almost all material wealth was the direct produce of the herdsman or the man who worked on the land with his plough and his hoe.

Ethiopia shared with the rest of tropical Africa a primitive peasant agriculture; the difference was that there stood upon this basis a large hierarchical structure of government. This meant that the cultivator must, as the Ethiopians themselves express it, 'carry upon his shoulders' all that very large proportion of the population which had withdrawn themselves from work on the land. This included the Emperor; all his officials, central and provincial, great and small; the vast hierarchy of the church and the large armies of soldiers. As a result of the undeveloped economy and communications of Ethiopia, the services of the agriculturalist had for the most part to be used directly by the contribution of part of the crops or cattle from his own land or by the use of his labour upon that of another. While slave labour was widely used for domestic purposes, especially in the houses of the rich, it was not in the north used very extensively in the fields, and the main support of Ethiopian state and society was not the slave but the theoretically free cultivator, the *gabar*. The elaborate systems of land tenure and of tribute with all their provincial variations represent only the different means by which his services and produce were utilized by the government and by other classes. It was not the land but the labour of the *gabars* on the land which provided the support for provincial as well as imperial administration. Hence the importance of the forms of tenure and tribute.

The word *gabar* has been used as a term of reproach against Ethiopia. At the end of these chapters on the provinces the reader will be in a better position to judge how far this charge was just, and especially how far it accumulated evil association by the forms it assumed in the conquered south. Here the position of the northern *gabar* must be defined in its simplest terms. In theory and, at its best, in practice, the status was not synonymous with slavery or even with oppression. Literally it means one who pays *gibr* or tribute. 'There is no shame in the word "gabbar"' was the general Ethiopian opinion recorded by an observant British consul.[1] As tribute was in theory based upon land

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

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not the person, it has been said that high notables and the Emperor himself might, in strict technicality, be called *gabars*, since they might hold land burdened with some *gabar* service. Moreover—again in the theory—*gabars* were not, like the serf, tied to the soil; they could leave their land and seek a new holding elsewhere.

The position can be put in another way. The Ethiopian, like the Englishman, owed dues to the central government or to its representative; firstly, he owed the Emperor tribute and tithe for his land; secondly, he owed the equivalent of local rates, and, thirdly, when he was a tenant, he owed rent. The only difference, it might be said, was that the Ethiopian paid all these dues in grain, honey, firewood, stock, or labour instead of in money. The difference was, however, fundamental. In the absence of central control or uniformity and in situations where the *gabar*, the man who provided all this tribute in kind with his own hands, happened to be in a weak position, the form of payment opened the way to all kinds of extortion.

Mrs. Sandford, who with her husband ran a farm for many years in Galla country near the capital and was therefore in a position to provide very authoritative evidence upon this subject, gives the following account of the *gabars*, presumably those in her district. They owed the governor or soldiers to whom they were allotted both produce and services: these might be one day's labour out of three, eight or ten days; the provision of timber for building the master's house and grass for its thatching; firewood and one fifth of the grain crop in addition to the Emperor's tenth. This, she concludes, might have been reasonable especially if the *gabars* could have dared to use their right of appeal. 'But in fact the abuse proved stronger than the system.' The masters exacted more than their due 'and the system was in practice as extortionate as those of old Roman days. Officer and soldier were equally rapacious, . . .' The *gabar* dared not appeal. Coming from a witness of such experience and of such devotion to Ethiopia, this evidence carries weight.[1]

The tithe of grain was owed to the Emperor by every subject unless he were exempted on account of his other services to state or church. This grain was collected on the threshing floors and stored in the governor's official granaries; it was used mainly for the sustenance of the soldiers. Since such a bulky product could hardly be carried far in Ethiopia there was very little market in cereals. Pastoral tribes were expected to pay their tithe in stock. There was also a tribute of produce or labour, or both, which was nearly always taken by the governor or his representative and there were further dues or presents to the sub-

[1] Sandford, pp. 48–9.

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.651 ordinate officials which varied from province to province. There were also the heavy dues of purveyance to passing officials, soldiers and even private travellers, whose records are full of evidence of the readiness with which through the centuries this burdensome obligation was accepted. Some of these dues were not easily to be distinguished from the further requirements in kind and in labour which a tenant might owe, in addition, as rent to a private landlord.

THE EMPEROR AND THE LAND

●423 From the *gabar*, who formed the basis of the system of land tenure, we return to the Emperor at its apex. The conflict as to whether provincial office was held personally and terminally at the royal will was reproduced in the closely complementary question of the usage and ownership of land and its dues by which alone office could be supported. Here, in theory as well as in practice, the Emperor was less successful in maintaining his claims. It was true that land and office generally went together, but land-holding was wider than office-holding; it was more complex and it affected more people. Moreover, while office was highly desirable, the earth, meeting all necessities, was the main object and, once acquired, was held with the utmost tenacity.

423 643 The theory maintained by the Emperors was that they owned all the land in the country and that it was therefore all held at their will. 'He takes and gives all lands at pleasure' we read in Tellez.[1] 'The King's authority is so unlimited', wrote Lobo, 'that no Man can in this country be called with Justice Proprietor of anything, nor doth any Man when he Sows his Field know that he shall Reap it.'[2] Numerous authorities follow these early observers in this view. The assumption was that no land could be private property and therefore heritable. The most authoritative challenge to this theory was to be found in the ancient *Fetha Nagast* itself: in this, private property was formally recognized.[3] Turning to the latest age we find that a clause (article 27) of the constitution of 1931 runs as follows: 'Except in cases of public utility determined by law, no-one shall be entitled to deprive an Ethiopian subject of the movable or landed property which he holds.' Between these dates stretches the long struggle of the crown to counter these rights and to retain control over the lands granted out on various terms to the several categories of subjects.

[1] Tellez, p. 53.

[2] Lobo, J., *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (translated by Mr. Le Grand), 1735, p. 263.

[3] Guidi, p. 361. Quoted by M. de Coppet in Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 611.

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THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: LAND TENURE

According to one legend, when Menelik I returned from his visit to his father Solomon, he divided the land into three parts, one for the crown, one for the church and the other for the laity. Certainly, as regards the first part of the division, the Emperors retained vast estates as the royal domain. These tended to be most numerous in the region of the imperial headquarters and became less so towards the periphery of the country. We saw in the chapter upon public finance that the estates from which it was possible to supply the royal household with grain, honey, *tej*, etc., were known as *mad-bet*. These estates included also wide pastoral areas which carried the royal herds. There were numerous large estates scattered about the country which the Emperor had granted to members of his own family and so long as these remained closely bound to him they were, politically, as useful as his personal domain.

From his royal domains the Emperor took all the produce that could be delivered to him. With the conquest of the southern lands and the arrival of the railway he was able to grow and to sell coffee. Outside his domains, in spite of his frequent claims, the Emperor was only able to make effective claim to waste, lapsed, conquered, and confiscated lands. Sometimes individuals or groups, holding private heritable land, would ask the Emperor to take it over as royal land in order to protect themselves from the rapacity of some local lord or the claims of some other group. In Dembea the people did this because the Emperor was allotting so much of their land to the churches against their will and they felt that if it was royal land he would not be so generous with it.[1] An unsuccessful rebellion would give an excellent opportunity for him to regain some of his lost land by means of confiscation. What he resumed with one hand he was always giving away with the other into what was in fact, if not in theory, private ownership. He still retained over this, of course, his rights to taxation. This consisted, as we have seen, in the tithe, a tenth of the produce, which was generally confined to grain, and to a land-tax which varied in amount and character from time to time and from place to place. He also reserved the right to make special levies.

Within the vast terminology referring to Ethiopian land tenure there are two terms which must be defined and kept before the reader. The one is *rest*, which means hereditary ownership, and the other is *gult* which describes land in which the Emperor had granted away some or all of his rights to tribute. (There is a conflict of authorities as to whether the Emperor had ever granted away his tithe as well as his tax upon *gult* land.) Clearly either of these kinds of tenure was very desirable;

[1] Rossini, pp. 104–5.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

423 when combined they represented the most coveted of all tenures as well as the one most weakening to the imperial authority.

From the different kinds of grant made to the various classes, the governors, the churches, the soldiers and others, for various purposes, arose the many categories of land tenure.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE LAND

635 651 661 423 The position of the provincial governor was relatively simple. He collected the whole of the Emperor's tribute within the province (in so far as this had not already been granted away by a process which will be examined presently), and he used it for the support of his administration, which meant of himself, his deputies, judges, messengers, and above all, the soldiery. As we have seen in the chapter upon public finance, it is impossible to generalize upon the proportion of tribute which the governor sent on to his Emperor except that it varied with the distribution of power at any given time between the two of them, and in the north might range from the refusal by a distant and almost autonomous governor to send anything but perhaps a token payment to the large tributes in kind and in money which are described by observers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is frequently stated in the European accounts of Ethiopia that the office of governor, like all other offices, was sold by the Emperor and by this method, injurious as it was, he would be sure of at least some return. He would also have an interest in frequent changes of office; the governor's interest would consequently be in extorting all he could from his province as rapidly as possible. 'They are generally more like robbers than governors', was the conclusion of one witness.[1] 'The governors purchase their Commissions, or to speak properly their privilege of pillaging the Provinces" concludes another.[2] 'You are governor of Ras el Feel', the Emperor's secretary announced to Bruce. 'I hope you will never see it. It is a hot, unwholesome country, full of Mahometans, but its gold is as good as any Christian gold whatever.'[3]

That these exactions continued into Haile Selassié's day was shown by the measures he took in his endeavours to reform the provincial administration. These exactions would certainly be less in the northern provinces where the governor was dealing with an ancient society, that of his own people, in which all relationships and tributes were sanctified by long established custom.

The governor would parcel out the tribute he controlled amongst his many lieutenants in the districts and amongst his own and the Emperor's

[1] Tellez, p. 53. [2] Lobo, *op. cit.*, p. 263. [3] Bruce, vol. 3, p. 365.

½ [not processed - Amhyst]

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THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: LAND TENURE

soldiers. He would also have, like the Emperor, official estates set aside for the upkeep of his large household and it would be these he would be most anxious to retain if he lost his governorship. For these estates he could call up the labour of soldiers and *gabars*.[1] Parkyns recorded in the mid-nineteenth century that for his estates the governor could exact one day's work for clearing, one for sowing, two for cleaning, and two for harvesting, and this was still the custom in this century.[2] Instead of cultivating his estates directly by using labour in this way, the governor might lease his land to tenants who would pay him a stated proportion of the crop as rent. According to one authority in the north, governors claimed that one tenth of all privately owned land should also be cultivated for him and he would himself choose the lands. Where, as in Tigré, the governorship tended to remain for a period in the same family this was not so grave an injury to the province, but if a governor from outside were sent in the people might not dare to demand back the lands from the local family and were obliged to set aside new lands for their new governor.[3] Besides the governor's estates there would be others attached to the various offices of his assistants.

In addition to their more regular dues from the people it was customary for governors and their assistants to demand special gifts from time to time, such as a sheep from each village at Easter and at the festival of the true cross.

THE CHURCH AND THE ARMY

The Emperors were always extremely generous to the church, even if they had not gone so far as to allocate that third of the original legend which the famous cleric Takla Haimanot claimed in 1270. Every priest, monk, *debtera*, and deacon, in so far as he was excused from the work of the fields, required that land furnished with slaves or *gabars* should be set aside for his support. A vast total of land was burdened with this service. The piety of Emperors warred here with their political interests—at one moment they were moved to give, at another to resume their gifts. But it was not easy to assert the royal claim against monasteries which were undying corporations or against churches which needed permanent endowment and were, moreover, served by priests determined to pass on their lands with their offices to their sons. Moreover, the very character of the grants protected them. Their most

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–91.

[2] Parkyns, M., *Life in Abyssinia*, 1853, vol. 2, p. 230. Also Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

[3] Rossini, pp. 107–8.

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794 423 651 frequent form was that of *samonanya*, lands given to support the service of the mass. The Emperors had granted much *gult* to the churches and thus gave them the power to keep all the royal tribute from it and even to administer justice and to retain its proceeds. Even where this grant had not been made as *rest-gult* it was not easy to regain control of it and the convention was that, when such land was taken back by the Emperor, an equivalent estate should be granted.[1]

It should be remembered that land was not held collectively by the church but, as in England, by the individual 'parish' churches or monasteries or by the Abuna and the *Ichegé*, who between them held very large estates, and by other ecclesiastics.

701 423 Military service, regarded in this chapter from the aspect of land tenure, was a universal obligation upon land unless the land was held by the church and specially exempted. The obligation was on the land rather than on the person, so that if a woman held a piece of land which had to supply soldiers it was her duty to raise and equip them. There were many different kinds of military tenure because each type of service was attached to special pieces of land and called by different names which need not be listed here. There was, for example, land which supplied the following services—the fusilier, the artilleryman, the muleteer, the porter transporting baggage, the bearer of the red tent or the Emperor's tent poles, the makers of gunpowder, the quartermaster, the forager, and many other military needs. It was even specially laid down for each piece of land whether its soldiers should fight in the centre or the left or right wings of the army.[2]

Estates would have to give the service of soldiers in varying numbers from the single man to a thousand or more. Those who owed these large numbers were, of course, very important people, and in Shoa at least it was probable that the man liable for a thousand would be a holder of *gult* over a considerable area.[3] Parcels of land might be allotted to 'regular' soldiers to support them while on service, or given as a reward for service, generally with a continuing obligation to provide a soldier of some special type.

It will be seen that there was no uniform system for the raising or support of the soldiers, especially as these were serving different masters. Thus in one province there might be part of the Emperor's army as well as the governor's provincial army, while both the latter and his district governors would have their personal bodyguards. Though in the north the serving soldiers were generally supported out of the tithes, they might be quartered directly upon the people or given lands of their

[1] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, pp. 611–13. [2] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–90.
[3] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 612; also de Castro, pp. 281 ff.

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own. The soldier was generally freed from all taxes except the tithe and this might be excused where he provided his own horse and weapons.

Not only was there great variety in the arrangements but they were by no means static even in the conservative north. An example of this may be given from Gojjam. Here under Ras Hailu and his father, the *Negus* Tekla Haimanot, the soldiers were simply local men who, being exempted from tithes and other dues to the government, cultivated their own land and did three months' service a year at the governor's headquarters. After Ras Hailu's rebellion and his deposition in 1932 on grounds of misrule, Ras Imru, the Emperor's kinsman, was sent in his place. Although he was said to be a much more enlightened governor, the people murmured because he brought with him his 'foreign' Shoan army which oppressed the *gabars* who had to support it. This is an example of how, in the face of the complexities of the social situation, an ostensibly reforming measure might be frustrated.

PRIVATE TENURE

The main forces by which land and tribute were held by what may be called the public elements of the national life of Ethiopia, the Emperor, the church, the governor and his assistants, and the soldiers, have been very briefly indicated. The picture, even in this outline form, would not be complete without some reference to tenure by private persons, especially by those small farmers and peasant cultivators by whose work the rest were nourished.

The position of the *gabar* has been defined in relation to the rest of the community. When, in the northern provinces, we examine this class in their own right we find that it presented the most enduring strands in the texture of Ethiopian society and that its composition leads us back to the tribal past.

Over large parts of the northern provinces, especially those that were not too seriously disturbed or overlaid by Galla invasions, the land was held by groups of peasant holders, generally under the leadership of one or more families, and any inquiries about their origin would lead almost at once to romantic personal stories that may date, or appear to date, from some centuries before. These stories would explain how that group had come to be where it was and how its forefathers had first occupied the land.

These groups held by *rest*, that is, by hereditary right. They held as a group which had preserved some of the close ties of an original kinship group even though in the course of time it had absorbed many

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'foreigners', and even though, within the group ownership, there was individual and family ownership of the land.

The allocation of and the succession to the land was governed by ancient custom. This custom varied greatly because, as d'Abbadie said, 'In Ethiopia one of the despairs of the traveller, who thinks he knows the country, is to discover, sometimes by chance, that such and such a community, comprising a family, a part of a village, or district is of a different origin from the population which surrounds it.' In internal land and family matters, it would keep its own private law.[1] In some communities there were meetings at fixed intervals of three to seven years according to the region and at which the reallocation between families of the different types of land, which was in several categories according to its fertility, was arranged. Apart from these adjustments by agreement, land went from father to son. Land transactions were announced by the public crier and registered, generally by entry in a Bible or other book, in the 'parish' church. The penal code of 1930 decreed up to three years' imprisonment for failure to register transactions in hereditary land,[2] but this decree may not have been fully effective in the provinces by 1935. Transactions were always carried out before witnesses. These sometimes included young children who might be given a feast of the delicacy of fried grain in order to fix the event in their memories.

Landmatters, indeed, were settled within such land-holding groups with little intervention from higher authority so long as all its members gave what was due to the government or to the representative of the government. Their relations with this representative would be through their family and the heads of their family group and it is obvious that a community with this degree of autonomy in the vital matters of land and tribute, in addition to the minor legislative and judicial powers already described,[3] might be regarded as largely self-governing in local matters. Such *restenya*, or hereditary land-holders, were further fortified in their position by the recognition of private property in the *Fetha Nagast*. In Menelik's later days, his council confirmed this position by a decree in which it was promised that except in cases of rebellion and treason even criminals should not be dispossessed from such tenure.[4] This provision was repeated in clause 9 of the penal code of 1930. It is probable that it was unbroken settlement by an Amhara tribal community which alone could offer effective resistance to royal and other pressure.

The Emperor would, however, seize every opportunity of breaking

[1] d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 90. [2] Clause 458. [3] See above, p. 142.
[4] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 611.

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down the resistance of the undisturbed customary societies in favour of his own centralized control. Thus in Wallo, an ancient Galla region, the people had been organized into seven districts under the rule of seven of the original families. When Menelik first wrested its allegiance from John he had to conciliate these local leaders, but later, when he became stronger, he weakened them and had the land measured and more evenly distributed. In 1916 when the *Negus* Mikael was defeated after an attempt to rebel, Wallo was parcelled out under generals, and soldiers were put in by the central government.

MEASUREMENT AND INHERITANCE

Before concluding this general account some answer must be given to the questions as to whether there was any survey and registration and what were the rules of inheritance?

There was, of course, no survey as the term is understood in England. There was a measurement, a *gasha*, which was the equivalent of 80 to 100 acres, and in some parts of the country and notably, as we shall see, in parts of the conquered south the land had been measured. In Ethiopian terms, 'the cord had been thrown', sometimes once and sometimes a second time, with more accuracy, after the land had been cleared and farmed. Measurement of the land gave the Emperor and his officers greater control over it and its resources and the prime mover in this process had been Menelik.

In the north, measurement has been by no means universal. In Gojjam, most stubborn and independent of provinces, and in Bagemdir there was no general measurement of land. In other northern provinces it appears that when estates were granted in recent times by the Emperor, especially those in *rest-gult* tenure, they were measured and registered. Small estates and the lands held by groups of *restenyas*, divided and at times redivided, were distinguished by natural landmarks and registered in men's minds or they might be entered into parish registers. The new land-tax of 1944 was based upon the unit of the *gasha*, but it is very doubtful whether measurement had been sufficiently carried through by this date to make it possible to execute the law upon this basis.

With regard to inheritance, we have seen that this was only held to be permissible for *rest* land though in fact it was far more widely applied. It was not permissible to leave land away from the family or the group, or equally to give or sell it, without the permission of those chiefly interested. In leaving land the owner could allocate as much as two thirds to his favourite child—and in some parts this could be a daughter—while the rest was divided equally between the other children.

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THREE LOCAL EXAMPLES OF TENURE

423 634 Three local examples will illustrate tenure. The first is from Gojjam under Ras Hailu.[1] The province was divided into fourteen districts. Most of these were in turn divided into two or three sub-districts. In each of the fourteen districts was a district governor (*abagaz*), who generally bore the title of *dejazmach*, and an assistant or deputy (*Mislané*). These men, appointed solely at the governor's will, were in general charge of the administration and jurisdiction of the district. Beside them functioned the *gulta gaji*, who was always a local man whose title was hereditary in certain families. He oversaw the collection of taxes, settled small cases between the *gabars*, and acted as liaison between the government and the people. He appointed as assistants a *chiqa-shum* for each village-group, an office which was held for a year and rotated among heads of families.

651 The list of the tributes paid to the various officials is very indefinite as to the amount and is of value only as indicating very generally the complexity of the system rather than the exact weight of the burden carried by the peasantry or the proportions taken by the different officers. Taxes and payments were divided as follows between the various authorities.

Government	Tithe in grain.
	Tax of $2 on each pair of oxen.
	afarsata fines.[2]
	Tax of $1 on each hut.
Abagaz (district governor)	Court Fees.
	Labour dues.
	Dues for use by men and cattle of warm mineral springs.
Mislané (deputy)	*Irbo* (a proportion of the government tax paid in kind).
	A proportion of the court fees paid to the *abagaz*.
	Labour dues.
Gulta gaji (hereditary chief)	A proportion of the grain crop of his district.
Chiqa-shum (village head)	His reward was exemption from taxation during year of office.[3]

[1] From information obtained locally by F. de Halpert. [2] See p. 149.

[3] It may be of some slight help in interpreting the money payments to note that the penal code of 1930 equates a quarter of a dollar with one day's work of an unskilled labourer. (Clause 6.)

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had been removed, leaving the heads of villages and districts in direct contact with the Italian resident.

Our third example comes from Eritrea. No excuse is needed for this excursion beyond the present borders of Ethiopia, since the Eritrean plateau was until fifty years ago a part, and one of the oldest parts, of the Ethiopian state, and this region may again revert to its former status. In addition, however, we have the great advantage that Dr. Nadel, an anthropologist of experience and authority, has had the opportunity in this region under the British military administration to make a thorough investigation of a land tenure closely resembling that of northern Ethiopia.[1]

On the Eritrean plateau the most characteristic unit was the *enda*, a number of families which claimed to have descended from a single ancestor. This group was not static; it might decline or be dispersed, or it might thrive and reach a size when it became necessary to break up and form new *endas*. It was not an administrative unit, but in certain matters it acted as a unity through meetings of its elders. The administrative unit, the village, generally covered several *endas*, though these may have all descended from a parent *enda*. The village unit might also cut across *endas*.

Above the village administrations, in the days before the Italian conquest, came the hierarchy of the Emperor, his governors and deputy governors. These were often strangers from the south though local chiefs might be promoted to imperial positions. The imperial taxation had to be delivered to these officers, and the Emperor might arbitrarily cut out estates in *gult* for their support, or for that of monasteries or colonies of soldiers posted in these outlying regions to support the Emperor's power.

These rights may be regarded as extraneous to the underlying customary tenures which are divided by Dr. Nadel into three, ownership by the individual (which generally meant the individual family); by the kindred, or *enda*, and by the village. The first two types of ownership might, owing to the blurring of the edges between the three groups by growth or decline, shade off into each other.

In his discussion of family ownership Dr. Nadel gives us an authoritative definition of *resti*, which may cover ownership ranging from that of an individual to that of a large kinship group. This tenure was held by the people to be the most fundamental and sacred, and its characteristics were firstly its relative absoluteness; secondly its hereditary nature,

[1] Nadel, S. F., 'Land Tenure on the Eritrean Plateau', *Africa*, vol. 16, nos. 1 and 2, pp. 1–22, 99–109. The succeeding pages are closely based on this concise report.

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and thirdly its derivation from the rights of some forefather who first took possession of the land. 423

Where the *resti* land was still held by a large kindred group, the individual family had a secondary or derived ownership of a piece of land adequate to meet its needs. When a son married and set up house he applied through his father to the council which allocated a plot to him within the kindred land. Thus the hereditary right was to land within that of the *enda*, not necessarily to a particular piece of land. Sons and, in certain conditions, daughters would inherit their father's rights. Before a man could give or sell his share of land he must offer it first to members of his *enda* and then to those of his village, and this restriction might apply to a subsequent sale of the land. It seems that in some parts the control of the *enda* council was even stricter and that the individual had no more than a very restricted usufruct, with frequent reallocation by lot. 423 428

The complexities of land tenure have only to be defined in these general terms to make it necessary to list numerous qualifications and apparent inconsistencies. These cannot all be given here. Mention must, however, be made of the system of village ownership, which, as a result largely of later immigration and of heavy pressure upon the land, had in some parts overlaid or ousted the *enda* ownership and the principle of *resti*. In these units (the development of which, though not begun by the Italian Government, was encouraged by it), the village council made an equal division of its lands, which were allocated by lot in three categories according to fertility, to all inhabitants of the village, whether *restenyas* or not. There was a redistribution at periods ranging from three to seven years. Village ownership appears to have been more just and flexible than that of the *enda*, though it is not clear how it dealt with improvements and permanent crops. 423

From the social aspect it is interesting to learn that everywhere, even where village ownership had deprived the *restenyas* of their special privileges with regard to land, their personal prestige remained. The *restenyas* were the people of superior status who, however small their holdings, could claim to belong to families which descended from the first family to hold the land. This gave them a peculiar status; it endowed them with a primacy in the local councils and even, in some parts, with certain small dues and privileges; it is from their ranks alone that the village chief, the *chiqa-shum*, was chosen. 423 554

In addition to these main forms of ownership the *restenyas* could create subsidiary forms by leasing or lending their land or, especially in the case of large and absentee landlords, by introducing a number of tenants to farm their land and pay with their services, the landlord 427

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427 paying the tribute for these *gabars*. (This method was also very common in Ethiopia proper.) There might also be forms of métayer contract. It need hardly be said that, after very long tenure, a tenant would try to claim that his land was *resti*, and that, with the growing shortage of land, numerous disputes resulted.

427 One of the main interests of Dr. Nadel's valuable analysis of Eritrean land tenure is that it shows the Ethiopian system as it was after half a century of Italian rule and as it is now under a British administration. The Italians swept away the upper parts of the structure except in so far as they allowed favoured chiefs to hold their old large estates, but at a lower level the system has been little changed. British administrators—who, of course, must act with the restraint of temporary caretakers—found their main problems arising from the intense, indeed passionate, competition for the inadequate amount of land which leads to numerous and long-drawn-out disputes. The Eritreans are proud of their land law, but to the European observer the lack of finality in their disputes and the great difficulty of obtaining any implementation of the decisions either of arbitrators or of native courts are great obstacles to the proper development of the land. But the difficulties with regard to tenure are, in all probability, much wider than legal questions and arise from the strain which the changing use of land is putting upon all customary African tenures.

423 Another most interesting conclusion drawn by Dr. Nadel is that the stubborn pride and conservatism of the *restenyas*, who cling to all their privileges with a fierce tenacity, represent a social evil. He speaks of the narrow exclusiveness of the system and its rigid political and economic privileges. 'It excludes large sections of the population permanently from a share in the administration of their own communities and keeps them in a state of dependence and economic insecurity. . . . To-day we are facing not merely the economic system of *resti* but a *resti* mentality.'[1] If this is true of that part of Ethiopia where both migrations and Italian policy have weakened this system, it is likely that in northern Ethiopia the problem is presented in even more rigid and difficult terms. But this, again, is only one illustration of the widespread African problem of harmonizing the existing tenurial rights of the original land-holders with the interests of the population as a whole.

[1] *Ibid.*, no. 2, p. 108.

[pp. 293 ff not processed]

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(MANZ)

*175 643 nable. As the rainy season was approaching, Haile Malakot retreated to Shoa, where he fell sick and died. For the first time since Nagāssi, Shoa was left without an effective leader. Tēwodros marched into Manz from Wallo, and Shoa capitulated with little struggle. Eleven-year-old Menelik, son of Haile Malakot, was taken hostage.

Ten years later Menelik escaped from the camp of Tēwodros and regained Shoa. Slowly and carefully he built up his power. Tēwodros' reign raced to its tragic end. Takla Giyorgis II reigned briefly at Gondar, the last emperor to sit there. Yohānnes IV of Tigre governed the country for seventeen years. When Yohānnes died, Negus Menelik was forty-five and ready. Nagāssi's seed, eight generations later, reached the throne of all Ethiopia on November 3, 1889.

CULTURAL PROFILES

The Manzē Ethos

*175 185 The goals of Nagāssi and his descendants, apart from simple increase of power, were to recover the lands taken from their fathers and to stiffen the authority of Christianity in Shoa. Their success was virtually unbroken by [181] reason of exceptional soldierly prowess and political perseverance. These are ideals and qualities embodied par excellence in the people of Manz.

• 423 181 [428] Sanctity of *rist,* or land inherited from one's parents, is a cardinal value in the Manzē scheme of things. Such land must not be given or sold to anyone who is not a close relative. People generations removed from actual residents of Manz still retain claims to family land there, still cherish the idea that if they so desired they could go back and live on it. As an urbanized Manzē once told his nephew in Addis Ababa: "No matter how far you travel abroad, no matter how long you stay away, you will always be able to think of your [539] family land in Manz as your true home." This sentiment is expressed in a proverb:

Ya-Manz rist be-shi amatu/la-bālabētu.
Manz *rist* to the thousandth year/belongs to the owner.

A squatter may fight to keep his land from falling to some stranger who claims it as having belonged to his grandfather, but in his heart he respects the values that support such a claim.

[577] By Manzē standards the good man is thus one who defends the land of his fathers, seeing that it is not sold to outsiders or that foreigners do not come to [685] take it. If someone plows another's land without permission, he must be punished. If the matter can be settled through litigation, well and good; if it requires recourse to violence, so be it. To let such an offense go unavenged [691] would be the worst sort of shame. Grievances concerning their "hereditary

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estates" make up the most common subjects of litigation in Manz, and hardly a day passes in the courts there without a hearing on some case about *rĭst*.

The Manzēs are as stubbornly loyal to their fathers' faith as they are to their land. They take much pride in the strictness with which the Orthodox fasts are observed in Manz, and in the fact that non-Christians are not to be found there. A number of legends told locally represent Manz as an especially hallowed Christian territory. One legend says that after the Crucifixion the angel Uriel gathered some of Jesus' blood on his wings and flew to Manz. Standing on the hill of Dabra Qopros in Māmā Meder, he shook his wings and thereby sprinkled the holy blood over the entire area. Another story dates the sanctification of Manz by the blood of Jesus to the time when a portion of the true Cross was brought to Ethiopia and tells of how on the way to its repository at Gishēn Māryām, in Wallo, some drops spilled from the relic onto Manz soil.[37] Still another legend relates that the Virgin Mary sojourned in Manz when Jesus was a young boy. Lake Alo Bāhr in western Gērā Meder is said to be the product of Mary's wrath—her punishment of the people who lived on what was dry land at the time for judging against her in a dispute with a local woman.

To defend his land, church, or honor, the typical Manzē is ready at short notice to fight to the death. In their own eyes, as in the eyes of others, the men of Manz are reputed for hardiness and combativeness. *Mot ged yallam* ("Never mind about death!") is the motto one governor from Manz volunteered as the key to the ethos of his people. The Manzē wants his son to be *guabaz* ("brave") and uses this term, like that of *waṭādar* ("soldier"), as a favorite compliment. The names which are characteristically given to children in Manz express this determination:

Ahidē	"Thrasher"	*Goshemē*	"Shover"
Asdangāṭ	"Frighten"	*Latybalu*	"Let Them Bow"
Atāmantā	"Don't Hesitate"	*Mān Yāzhāl*	"Who Orders You?"
Balātchaw	"Give It To Them"	*Nādaw*	"Wipe Him Out"
Balāy-metā	"Hit On The Top"	*Ṭālārgē*	"Powerful"
Chabudē	"Squeezer"	*Tāsaw*	"Smash Him"
Ch̤afch̤efē	"Hacker"	*Weqātchaw*	"Thrash Them"

Female names in Manz sometimes reflect this virile emphasis; for example, *Hijibātchaw* ("Go Against Them") or *Asagadatch* ("She Makes Them Bow").

A common symbol of physical bravery is the *dulā*, a hardwood staff about three feet long. The Manzē is rarely seen without his *dulā*. It has many purposes—to brace his shoulders on long treks, to carry loads, to ward off dogs when he goes visiting, to support his body while listening to litigation or standing at the long church services.

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other hand, has hitherto been impeded by two characteristics of humanistic and social studies. The historian's view has been limited by his reliance on written records that deal chiefly with the activities of men of power and the conceptions of literati. The ethnographer or traveler who tries to give the peasantry its due has usually concentrated on the more evident and accessible facts of custom—activities related to work, play, kinship, and ritual. The peasant's inner feelings and notions have perforce been neglected.[2]

In default of a widely disseminated sensibility to peasant realities, modernizing Ethiopians have thus come to view the peasantry in terms of misleading stereotypes: either romantically, as an embodiment of virtue, awaiting only proper leadership to realize their suppressed aspirations for freedom, justice, and progress; or else as inhabitants of a dark hinterland, barbarous in custom and blind with superstition. In this chapter we shall attempt a more empirical account of one part of the Ethiopian peasant's world—that of the Amhara—with particular emphasis on the beliefs and values of the peasant himself. Our account is based on seven months of residence among the Amhara peasantry, using the observational techniques of participant observation, discreet questioning, analysis of folk expressions, and Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).[3]

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF PEASANT LIFE

The homestead is the basic ecological and social unit of the Amhara peasantry. The average homestead consists of from one to six small round structures, built of wattle (or stone, as in Manz) and capped with conical thatched roofs. A well-equipped homestead will have one building for eating and sleeping, one for animals, one for grain storage, one as a kitchen, and one for entertaining guests; though for many peasants all these functions are served by a single large building. The homestead is normally located on land worked by the peasant. While most peasants plow land whose use is theirs by hereditary right (*rĭst*), some are tenants on estates owned by the king, lords, monasteries, or older relatives.

The smallest homesteads consist simply of husband, wife, and unmarried children. Sometimes a young married son will remain within the family home and, much less frequently, a young married daughter. Occasionally an older relative will be sustained there, or a younger relative will be brought up there. One or more servants—slaves, until a generation ago—complete the household. The wealthier the peasant, the more relatives and servants will be found in the homestead.

At times hamlets will be formed by the clustering of households of a number of married brothers or other kin. These tend to have a patriarchal cast; if the father is no longer living, the oldest male relative usually assumes jurisdiction for the affairs of the hamlet. But the nucleated village, contrary to erroneous

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pia by a Muslim from the East—suggests a repetition of the Grāñ episode. Finally, there is the previously mentioned conception of the end of the world as a time of renewal, when those who died first will return to life and history will begin again.

Space, like time, is not regarded as an amoral and homogeneous continuum to be submitted to systematic measurement. Land is not something to be bought or sold at will, but belongs by right to a family, a church, or a ruling line. Land titles are defined loosely, by convention and approximation, and the Amhara peasantry have objected to attempts by the government to make exact measurements of their land. The reluctance to rationalize space is conspicuous even in the capital of Ethiopia, where to this day there are no street numbers, so that places can only be identified roughly as near a certain police station or past a certain hospital. Directions are indicated with difficulty. The points of the compass are almost never used, though there are words for the four directions. Instead, the vague terms for "up" and "down" serve to answer almost every question about location.

Though the peasants are often unclear about the precise boundaries of various place names in the countryside, they do know just where the several churches are located over a wide area. It is customary for them to locate a given place by reference to the nearest church. Thus they will say: "He lives below Abbo" or "We must travel above Mikā'ēl." As a result, locations in space are identified by the same set of co-ordinates as are events in time, namely, the names of the saints. Moreover, just as certain months each year are occasions for special celebrations in behalf of each sacred figure, so in the countryside certain churches are considered especially holy shrines. Thus, there is special veneration for *Ṭerr Māryām* ("St. Mary's Day in the month of Ṭerr") and Gishēn Māryām ("St. Mary's Church in the district of Gishēn").

The dominant configuration in the Amhara's experience of space is that of concentric circles. Whether or not we try to relate this to the cyclical organization of time, the fact remains that the pattern of a charged center surrounded by circles of decreasing significance recurs in the main areas of Amhara life.

It appears, first, in his architecture. The traditional peasant home is round, with a conical roof supported by a pole that rises in the center of the circle. This is the domestic inner sanctum, a room for eating and talking and getting warm by the fire. It is often separated by a circular partition from sections that serve for storage, cooking, and animals. The compound in which the home stands is surrounded in some regions by a stone or brush fence, a boundary that separates the residential kin group from the whole outside world.

This pattern is more fully developed in the churches, which are round like the huts but larger and contain two concentric circular partitions inside. The

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

zamad is highly subjective, and all constellations of ***zamad*** reflect the interests and affections of ego. For the quality of kinship can be attributed to persons who are not consanguineal relatives, and this is done without resorting to fictions of affiliation. The term ***wandam,*** for example, meaning "brother," is simply applied to any male person of about the same age to whom one feels closely attached. The term ***zamad*** itself is applied to anyone to whom one feels a close personal tié—even to a mere fellow-countryman whom one happens to meet in a distant region. It is thus not taking too great a liberty to translate the term ***zamad*** as "close ones."

The primarily subjective nature of the circle of ***zamad*** derives not only from the fact that it includes friends as readily as actual blood relatives. Within the bounds of consanguinity, the composition of the kin group with which a person identifies fluctuates according to his current needs, particularly with respect to land use rights. As Allan Hoben has demonstrated, corporate descent groups are important among the Amhara in that rights to land use are allocated on the basis of hereditary claims possessed by such groups; but the fact that in this ambilineal descent system each individual may claim multiple active affiliations, and enjoys a relatively wide range of choice, means that the particular corporate descent group with which an individual affiliates in order to claim his rights varies according to what land is subject to disputation. He may claim land via his father, his mother, or his children (through their mothers' rights), and in each case may trace descent back to a variety of apical ancestors.[9]

The next most inclusive sociological concept beyond the ego-oriented circle of ***zamad*** is that of ***agar,*** or "homeland."* The co-residents of one's ***agar,*** like those who comprise one's circle of ***zamad,*** are regarded as forming an important "in-group," outside of which all other persons are a priori rejected. Yet the Amharic concept of homeland, like that of kin, does not refer to a fixed social entity; its referent varies according to the context in which the individual chooses to use it. Thus, as we have seen, the concept of ***agar*** may be used to refer to one's parish, district, province, or even nation.

A more specialized dichotomy of some prominence in the outlook of the Amhara peasant hinges on variation in the altitude of homelands. Inhabitants of lowlands (***qolaññā***) and dwellers of higher regions (***dēgaññā***) tend to be conceived as polar cultural types. Different sets of habits and traits are attributed to them. Thus, according to one set of stereotypes, the ***qolaññā*** is viewed as a heavy drinker and hot tempered, while the ***dēgaññā*** is viewed as a heavy eater and inclined more to litigation than to violence. Again, the

* The less prominent category of ***wagan*** is intermediate between these two. ***Wagan*** has a primarily political connotation; it consists of one's consanguineal and affinal kin, friends and close retainers, all who may be mobilized in the event of political or military competition.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*565 461 leisurely style of life of his social superiors. He would prefer, if he could but acquire the necessary servants and corvée labor, to "cause to plow" (*ās-ārasa*) rather than to plow (*ārasa*) himself.

*565 461 181 577 183 [423] If, in sketching the Amhara peasant's conception of the "good life," one moves from the sphere of goals to that of norms and values, one may say that while work as such is not conceived as an absolute value, the work of plowing one's land is regarded as a primary moral responsibility. The peasant's obligations toward his land extend beyond working it, moreover. At the local level he is supposed to keep it within his family, and should be ready to defend his rights to land use against all comers. At the national level he should help to keep the land "free"; that is, out of the hands of all foreigners.

*565 78 181 183 [262] [301] Obligations toward the deity are mostly of a ritual nature. Observing the fasts and avoiding forbidden foods are perhaps most important of all. It is also important to wear the symbol of the Ethiopian Christian, the *mātab*, a simple neckcord often holding a wrought silver cross. The church should be visited and heavy work avoided on the appropriate holy days. Prayers should not be neglected. When one passes by a church he should bow three times; when he enters a church compound he should "greet" the ark by kissing some stone or pole of the church building.

*565 577 181 183 The Amhara's ideal of Christian piety does, however, include certain good works which should be carried out in order to gain God's favor—giving alms to the indigent, visiting the sick or the prisoner, and aiding the wayfarer (who is referred to as a "guest of God"). But such injunctions play a slight part in

*565 577 673 181 183 [626] the Amhara's rhetoric of social morality when compared to his extensive code of "shames," or *nawr*. Stealing and breaking the fasts are among the very worst *nawr*. Other *nawr* include murder without good reason or by a shameful means like poison; adultery; insulting or not showing proper respect toward others; failing to observe the conventions concerning engagement and marriage; failing to revenge offenses; and gossiping about others and thereby stirring up trouble. Though the sense of being shamed before God provides some measure of internal self-control in these matters, the Amhara peasant avoids immoral acts primarily for fear of being the victim of what others will say (*yelugntā*), so that he will not be "seized by shame" (*hāfrat*) or suffer humiliation (*wardat*). His prime moral concern is not to be caught in the act of committing some *nawr*.

*565 57 181 183 Positive moral obligations to persons outside the circle of close ones are thus kept to a minimum. Following the conventions of respect toward superiors and peers is all that is enjoined. The good life for the Amhara peasant is lived within a minimal, Hobbesian order. The ideal neighbor is defined as one who does not touch others (*saw aynakām*). He does not touch another's land, wife, money, or personal feelings.

*565 602 571 181 183 Among *zamad*, however, a much warmer ideal of human relations obtains.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

necessary, to die on the battlefield, as did Galāwdēwos, Yohānnes IV, and others. Hé had to maintain a minimum of political order, balancing off contending ambitions and subduing rebellious elements. Another important function was that of ultimate arbiter in judicial disputes.* As guardian of the church, moreover, he was active in endowing monasteries and churches and in resolving doctrinal disputes among the clergy.

To carry out these and related functions the emperor needed great wealth and political power. When the monarchy was intact he could command wealth from many sources: from the country-wide land tax (*gĭber*), in the form of honey, grain, or livestock, or such special fiscal assignments as saddles, plowshares, spears, ink, or tent pegs;[9] from assessed tithes on produce; in tribute from subject peoples, either in currency (gold, salt bars, etc.) or in kind; in revenues from traders; and from gifts from new appointees and hopeful office seekers. In theory, moreover, all the land of the empire belonged to its ruler; and, in fact, a good part of it was at his direct disposal, either for cultivation as royal estates or to distribute as compensation to those who served him.

The political power of the emperor was grounded in his command of troops supported by the royal bounty. In addition, he could command the troops of all the lords subject to his authority. Through frequent tours around the country he was able to reassert his hegemony from time to time in distant regions. But even from afar, a strong monarch could usually exert great control thanks to his authority to appoint or demote at a moment's notice any officer of the realm. As Alvares observed:

> No great lord of lands, if he is in them, can leave them, or set out for the Court on any account without being summoned by the [emperor]; and being summoned he will not fail to come for any reason. And when he sets out from the land of which he is the lord, he does not leave either wife or children or any property there, because he goes away in the expectation of never returning, since . . . [the emperor] gives when he pleases, and takes away when he pleases.[10]

The ideology of sacred monarchy served to legitimate theoretically boundless demands for wealth and power as well as to provide identity and morale for the body politic. It justified, too, occasional "deviant" behavior on the part of the monarch, virtually the only person with sufficient authority to innovate in this intensely conservative culture. The emperor has always been a primary agent of cultural innovation in Abyssinia, from the time of Ēzānā, who adopted Christianity in the fourth century; to Zar'a Yā'qob in the fifteenth

* To this day Haile Selassie devotes several hours a week to hearing court appeals in a session known as *chelot*.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

bajirond	guardian of royal property, treasurer (two)
liqa makuās	king's double and keeper of the king's mule
āggāfāri•	protocol officer, superintendent of banquets

The status of these dignitaries may have been particularly vulnerable, depending so closely as it did on the whims of the monarch. Nonetheless their proximity to the center of imperial power gave them unique advantages. They were in a position to receive many gifts for favors and influence, as well as to come by some part of the royal revenues and to attend the royal banquets. They were consulted, together with military commanders, provincial governors, and high ecclesiastics, on important matters of state. Lands granted to them for their services enabled them to support small retinues of their own, including, in some cases, military contingents. They were normally an important factor in promoting stability and continuity during the troubled moments that usually followed the death of an emperor.[26]

The above classification of titles is meant only to provide a quick overview of their variety; no such formal compartmentation existed in the Abyssinian perspective. All the titles converged into a single hierarchy.[27] What is more, titles were not strictly connected to offices or functions, so military titles were frequently given to court or civil functionaries. This was particularly true of the court of Menelik, where, for example, the Superintendent of Royal Tents bore the title *bālāmbārās* and the Chief Hand-washer that of *gerāzmātch*.[28] For centuries before, moreover, provincial governors were often known by military rather than civil titles, and men holding civil titles were liable to be called to take part in military campaigns by the sovereign.

The sociological reality underlying this overlapping of titles among the nobility was the essentially unspecialized nature of their role. The ideal type of the *makuānnent* was at once governor, soldier, and courtier. In time of war he set forth at his own expense, with his own troops, to support the cause of the emperor, or perhaps simply to defend his own regional interests. In time of peace he might sojourn, if permitted, at the court of his king or overlord, eating and drinking with his peers, giving counsel to his liege when asked, engaged in intrigue and otherwise seeking to improve his station.

When not active in warfare or the affairs of court, the nobleman would repair to his lands to supervise the agricultural production and the collection of rents from his tenants. The emperors rewarded nobles who served them with grants of land. The higher chieftains in turn rewarded their own followers accordingly. These estates were usually held *in absentia*, the peasants

• *Āggāfāri* is an important title in the courts of provincial lords but is not mentioned in the court list of Iyāsu I, nor in that of the *Ser'āta Mangest*.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

565 taxes collected in the name of the emperor. Concerning the imposts for which
631 the peasants were liable, Plowden wrote in 1844:
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[651] They pay a certain portion in kind to the Ras, or other great chief, and sometimes a regular tax in money; besides this, they must furnish oxen to plough the king's lands. Their immediate governor then takes his share in kind of every grain (say a fifth), and feeds besides a certain number of soldiers at the expense of each householder: he has rights to oxen, sheep, goats, butter, honey, and every other requisite for subsistence; he must be received with joy and feasting by his subjects whenever he visits them, and can demand from them contributions on fifty pretexts—he is going on a campaign, or has just returned from one; he has lost a horse, or married a wife; his property has been consumed by fire, or he has lost his all in battle; or the sacred duty of a funeral banquet cannot be fulfilled without their aid.[30]

Two centuries earlier, observing similar phenomena, Almeida had concluded that "generally speaking, they are all plunderers rather than governors."[31] The only restraints on their exploitative behavior have been an occasionally keen sense of Christian propriety and the limits to what an exasperated local populace will bear.

565 The existence of a predatory class who serve military functions and maintain a gentry subculture is a common enough feature of traditional agrarian societies. What is perhaps less common in the Abyssinian case is the constellation of factors relating to the recruitment of members into this elite.

High secular status in Abyssinia was dependent on a complex of possessions—land, political strength, and honorific titles—which tended to reinforce
[423] one another. The possession of much land has always been a basis for con-
[556] siderable deference in Abyssinia. As a source of produce, rents, and revenues
[662] deflected from the Crown, moreover, it was also a source of wealth to be used in building up one's political strength by rewarding able soldiers and loyal
[661] followers, and by making gifts to one's superiors. Political power was directly obtained through the acquisition of governorships. Such offices were a further
[631] basis for much deference and, through the incumbent's access to tribute, customs fees, court fees, and gifts from his subjects, of much income as well.
[554] Titles, finally, not only were universally esteemed but also entitled the bearers to a style of life which included a presumptive right to gifts and obedience from all inferiors as well as the consumption of much wealth and power.

565 For all these possessions, the Abyssinian noble was directly dependent on
643 his king (or, in the case of a lesser noble, on his overlord). His dependence was twofold: land, political office, and titles came to him as gifts from the sovereign, and, what is more, their continued possession was contingent on
[423] the sovereign's continuing favor. Abyssinian "vassals" had no legal rights to their "benefices," and lands granted them could be withdrawn and given to others as the emperor wished. At the death of a feudal beneficiary his lands

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

reverted to the Crown unless specifically reconveyed to the heir by royal proclamation. Political office was no less precarious. Governors were made and unmade—by the traditional process known as *shum-shĭr* ("appoint-demote")—in short periods of time. The powerful position of governor of the maritime province (*bāhr nagāsh*) changed hands four times during the six years that Alvares spent in Ethiopia. Even when tradition assigned a certain post to the descendants of a certain lord, the emperors were able to exert control by shifting their favor from one descendant to another from year to year. Titles, unlike land and office, were granted for life, as we observed; but they were in no case hereditary, and thus every Abyssinian's hope for a title, let alone a raise in rank, depended on the grace of the king or of his major appointees.

Given these conditions, it was not possible for the nobility to become a closed, hereditary estate, or to develop a corporate identity capable of confronting the imperial will. On the contrary, thanks to the emperor's freedom to ennoble anyone whom he chose, there was a relatively high degree of social mobility, and the ranks of the upper strata were continuously being reshuffled.

Outstanding personal properties of various sorts often enabled Ethiopians of low birth to rise to high positions. The emperors and great lords conferred honors on those who served especially well in military expeditions, whatever their origins. Menelik's promotion of two Galla prisoners to rank as his highest generals is a famous case in point. The royal favor occasionally smiled on low-born Ethiopians who excelled in such qualities as physical beauty or witty repartee.[32] Unquestionable personal loyalty was another quality in high demand; freed slaves were sometimes given offices and dignities, since their lack of ties to political families made them particularly trustworthy.

Abyssinians have thus cherished the idea that they could rise to a higher station in life than that to which they were born. Comparatively few ever tried to do so, probably, but ambitious souls were never wanting. Seeking some benefice, or the glory of a title, or a position of power that would permit them to help their kinfolk or avenge themselves for a wrong suffered at the hands of some superior, they would attach themselves to the lord whose fortunes seemed brightest at the moment and hope, by valorous service and God's favor, to arrive someday at an estimable position.[33]

Nevertheless, though ability and fortune might carry any man high in the political hierarchy, he would not thereby automatically be accepted as one of the *makuānnent*. A self-respecting man of noble family would resist marrying his daughter to a commoner or person of dubious parentage, no matter how high a rank the latter obtained. For the Abyssinian nobility did form a self-conscious status group with a certain hereditary base. Its members shared a sense of superiority, a consciousness of kind, and an attitude toward commoners such as that expressed by the governor Takla Giyorgis to the Jesuit

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

565 554 Barradas: "Father, these villeins are like camels, they cry and groan when they are loaded, but in the end they carry the load that is put on them."[34] They set themselves off from the commoners, not only because of their style of life and subculture, but also because they came from well-known families.

Such sentiments were shared by the commoners. They would much rather be governed by a man from a noted family than by a person promoted from their own social level. The folkways expressed a disdain for the *nouvel arrivé*, for example, by poking fun at the office of *liqa makuās* (the king's double in time of battle). The *liqa makuās* was often a man from an unknown family, chosen because of his handsome features and resemblance to the king. The office permitted him to strut about in the king's clothes and inclined him to assume haughty airs. In some places it was customary to ridicule this upstart by referring to the minstrel, or *azmāri*, as *liqa makuās;* for the *azmāri*, too, was entitled to wear the kind of dress appropriate to the lord in whose banquet hall he performed, but the *azmāri* was a person of low prestige in Abyssinian society.

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643 565 554 In other words: although the emperors could appoint and depose whenever they pleased, with or without cause; and though "the land and persons of their subjects are equally their property, and every inhabitant of their kingdom is born their slave"; by itself the principle of royal favor is clearly inadequate to explain the Abyssinian pattern of social stratification. For, unlike the neighboring kingdom of Buganda, Abyssinia was not a straightforward despotism in which the dispensation of a *ḳabaḳa* was sufficient to elevate a man into the highest social stratum.[35] The claims of a quasi-hereditary noble status group have also had to be satisfied.

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565 How did this status group arise, and how have its claims been expressed and justified? What has been the history of its relationship with the monarchy? The existence of this class is anchored in the actual tendency for lands, office, and titles to be given to members of the same families. In reality, the emperors frequently let such possessions pass from father to son, either because they were in too distant a region or because there was no good cause for taking them away, and on occasion drew up written charters assigning grants of land to a man and his future descendants.[36] Indeed, one form of land tenure, known as *rïsta-gult*, was precisely a sort of hereditary fief, given in exchange for military service over the generations. In certain areas, moreover, it was a matter of tradition that the governorship be given to members of a certain family. Finally, although no man inherited a title, as son of a nobleman he might inherit the culture and facilities that would give him a much better chance than any commoner to obtain a title of his own.

[423] [631] [554] [423] [631] [554] [428]

Two other aspects of Abyssinian society supported this tendency toward the development of what amounted to local dynasties of nobility. One was the prestige attached to the "chiefs of Israel," any of the nobility who could

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innumerable gifts and services from the rank and file of the peasantry. Differences normally arose only when the secular powers deviated from what were generally the established norms. Thus, certain extremes of exploitation were on occasion strongly condemned by the clergy—usually the monks—as were certain transgressions of Christian custom by the secular powers, including at times the emperor himself. Amda Ṣeyon (1314–44), for example, was publicly rebuked, early in his reign, for having seduced one of his father's concubines and two of his own sisters. More generally, the clergy tended to react against flagrant misbehavior on the part of the military—such as looting the homes of those giving them quarter, or violating the right of asylum.

The extent to which the religious and secular powers stood in economic conflict seems to have depended largely on the amount of land available at any given time. Both groups were interested in the acquisition of rights to land revenues. The rights of the church to land are anchored in a traditional agreement, attributed to Yekuno Amlāk (1270–85), according to which the church was to receive one-third of the land in the realm. It is clear that the holdings of the church grew progressively larger from that time to the sixteenth century. With the subsequent diminution of Abyssinian territory and related social disorganization, the church's claim to its lands was not so scrupulously respected. Thus, Barradas observed that the emperors of the seventeenth century were as anxious to regain lands from the church for distribution to their soldiers as those of previous centuries had been generous in presenting them, while Takla Hāymānot decreed in 1771 that "all lands and villages, which are now or have been given to the Abuna by the King, shall revert to the King's own use."[51] Tēwodros, too, was anxious to recapture as much land as he could from the church. Later in the nineteenth century, however, as Menelik carried out his great territorial expansion, the church systematically acquired one-fourth of all lands in the annexed areas.

In general, it may be said that the clergy and nobility worked to further each other's interests. The nobility supported the clergy by giving endowments to churches and monasteries, setting up churches in newly conquered lands, and observing religious ceremonies as state functions. The clergy, in turn, served secular authority by providing a communications network for relaying and supporting official policies, excommunicating enemies, and providing counsel and morale in connection with military expeditions. Altogether, there was an easy commerce between the two elites. They felt common cause in their responsibilities and privileges vis-à-vis the masses. Occasionally there was even an exchange of personnel, when warlords ended their careers by becoming monks, or clerics acceded to high civil positions, like the Rās of Angot, for example, who in Alvares' time was an ordained priest.

When expectations of mutual support were not satisfied, however, conflict

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

recent restrictions on their income, it remains considerable. It is conservatively estimated that they possess at least fifteen per cent of the arable land in Ethiopia, and their general inertia with regard to agricultural reform remains a significant conservative factor.

In the modernizing sector, the position of the clergy has been much more vulnerable. The traditional forms of erudition and piety seem to bear little relevance to the intellectual and moral needs of the modernizing elements. The church's reputation for hostility to change further alienates them from it. But it is by no means certain that the church's position will only decline with the passage of time. Ethiopia will be profoundly susceptible to the appeal of traditional revivalist sentiment as the strains attendant on modernization increase; and by its publication of two monthlies, since 1947, the church has already shown, albeit in a limited way, its capacity to employ modern media for traditionalist purposes. On the other hand, if the tiny band of Western-educated church leaders succeed in promoting some degree of modernization in the church, through institutions like the Theological School and the Orthodox Students Association, the clergy may yet play a constructive part in the social and moral life of transitional Ethiopia. It remains to be seen whether its leadership will be effective enough to move the traditionalist clergy to make those adjustments necessary for survival as a respected status group in the modernizing sector.

The New Men of Power

After curbing the independent power of the *makuānnent,* Haile Selassie was careful to prevent others from taking their place in the political structure, determined as he was to consolidate in his own hand all the powers they once wielded. As a result of his centralization of government in Addis Ababa, however, a new group of men have gained pre-eminent status at the national level. We may call this group the "new nobility": "new" because of their development of an urban style of life, and because their influence as an elite is largely directed to the modernizing infrastructure, and "nobility" because of their perpetuation of the traditional hierarchical image of a superior and privileged status group. The core of this status group consists of government officials with the ranks of minister, vice-minister, and assistant minister, who function essentially as a personal administrative staff for the monarch.

As observed above, Tēwodros clearly saw the need for creating a new class of nobles, freed from regional interests and acting solely according to the

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elementary instructors in the government schools, and at salaries much lower than the better trained Ministry teachers. The presence of just one or two priests in these schools would eliminate the traditionalist opposition to them that is now so strong. The situation may be compared to that in Ceylon, where the opposition of Buddhist monks to government schools was eliminated by incorporating them as teachers in those schools.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

permissive rather than prescriptive, and the degree to which individual rights are protected against the demands of collectivities. 121*

In pursuing this analysis we shall examine in turn the three main institutional orders which were structurally differentiated in Amhara society: the kinship system, the church, and the military-political system. In conclusion we shall discuss some more general features of social organization among the Amhara which relate to the question of individual independence.

Kinship

A base line of social constraint among the Amhara is provided by the obligations inherent in their family system. The husband must work to provide food and to defend the boundaries of the family land against all comers. The wife must care for all that transpires within the home compound—preparing of food, fetching water, caring for infants, spinning cotton, tending the fire—and must avoid sexual relationships with other men. The children must tend the flocks, do other work chores, and generally obey the slightest command of any of their elders. Neglect of any of these basic obligations brings sharp reprisals: divorce of the husband, beatings of the wife and children. 121* 593 462 [857]

Obligations toward the parents persist, moreover, long after the children have married and established families of their own. Young married men are supposed to contribute one or two days a week to working their fathers' land, and to assist them in time of litigation. They are obliged to care for their parents when the latter have become too old to provide for themselves, an obligation sometimes discharged on a rotating basis among the surviving children. There is also a solemn obligation for the children to arrange the appropriate memorial feasts (*tazkār*) following the death of a parent, especially the one that is due on the fortieth day after death. 121* 593 [888] [764] [765]

Adolescent children are subject to the will of their parents with respect to choice of a spouse, and youths are expected to follow their fathers' wishes in connection with adult work roles. Threat of disinheritance is the powerful consideration that underpins these constraints. For their part, the parents are obliged to keep their land in the family. They may not sell it to outsiders, and must bequeath goods and land to their children, dividing them equally among the consanguine children, with perhaps a certain amount extra for the oldest son. [882] [423] [428]

With regard to siblings and more distant kin, however, relations are rather casual and obligations few. Although residence tends to be virilocal among the Amhara, descent is bilateral. Except for a small number of royal and aristocratic families, therefore, there are no obligations with respect to corporate lineages. The absence of formal structure in extended kin relations is 121* 602 [593] [591] [611] [601]

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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131 their combined ranks the political elite of Ethiopia has
779 been historically recruited. Third among the highland peoples are the Agaw. It appears likely that they are the descendants of the original Hamitic population of this region, and only during the last century have most Begemder Agaw been converted from their indigenous religious beliefs to membership in the Coptic Church. Within Begemder, they constitute a majority of the inhabitants of three non-contiguous areas. Fourth among highlanders are the rural Muslims, indigenous people who have been converted to Islam over the last five centuries.
[241] While the rural Amhara, Tigre, and Agaw are exclusively
[463] farmers, these Muslims divide their energies between farm-
[286] ing and working as artisans, mainly weavers of the toga
[443] cloth; Muslim women are prominant among the traders of
[562] the weekly markets held throughout the province. Least numerous of the highland people are the Falasha, Abyssin-
[423] ian Jews following a Mosaic creed. A despised and humil-
[326] iated people, the Falasha farm only rented fields
[286] (timene), and work as smiths as well as weavers; Falasha
[162] women are potters. Although the Falasha are localized in several regions, they nowhere constitute a majority
[361] of an area's residents. Like the Abyssinian Muslims, they reside either in hamlets of their own, apart from Amhara, or in peripheral homesteads of otherwise Christian hamlets. These distributions are summarized in Map2.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

*[192] ments decisions that come down from the meketel warada or warada.[12] Incumbency tends to rotate among the senior ristenãas of the parish. Amhara trace genealogies ambilineally to the original recipients of primary land rights (rist) to local fields. Ambilineages are traced from these apical ancestory through those descendants (ristenãas) who have made effective claims to the fields of the original estates. Over time, it is the genealogical links associated with land claims which tend to be [582] remembered, to the exclusion of other descent ties. Similarly, it is these links which are examined most carefully in deciding whether a proposed marriage would be properly exogamous (i.e., ideally excluding descendants of the sixth ascending generation).[13]

*793 From the perspective of the Amhara peasant, the ecclesiastical organization of Begemder consists of two levels, the bishopric (located in Gondar, the provincial

[12] A fereseña, rural policeman, is also a resident farmer of the parish.

[13] Hoben (1963:116-117) considers these matters in detail, and notes that occasionally the boundaries of exogamous unions are contracted to include the descendants of the fifth and even fourth ascending generations.

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motives of piety and supplication, to the saints' eponymic churches. Within the environs of Gondar, for example, there are forty-two churches, and perhaps half are of sufficient antiquity and fame to mark them for special visits on the saints' days. Each of the market towns contains at least one famous church. The larger towns are, moreover, the seats of their sub-provinces, and are the objects of visits by peasants on "government" (mongist) business. Most frequently, this means
[691]
[423]
litigation involving the disposition of land rights.

361 Two Rural Hamlets. Tikurmidir and Lemmariet are neighboring hamlets, situated on fertile dega lands. Together they occupy the southwest quadrant of Kidus Yowhannis parish (hamlet and parish names are pseudonyms), a three hour walk from the awraja seat, Dabat town, in the Woggera region. Of the two, Tikurmidir is larger:

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	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Total population	151	95
Total households	36	24

In both hamlets, a majority of households are headed by
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risteñas. These households are distributed among the hamlets' ambilineages as follows:

	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Ambilineage I	18	10
Ambilineage II	6	1

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	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Ambilineage III	4	
Ambilineage IV	3	
Ambilineage V		5
Ambilineage VI		3
Ambilineage VII		2
Total ristenas households	31	21

[423] In each of the hamlets, there are two households be-
*[192] longing to Amhara tenant farmers (timeneña), individuals unable to claim membership in any local ambilineage. These tenants, who provide their own seed and draught animals, return a quarter of their crops to the risteñas
[779] whose fields they use. There in Tikurmidir two addition-
[433] al timeneña households, whose members are Muslims. These
[286] households are headed by brothers who supplement their
*[192] agricultural activities by weaving the šama (toga) for local Christians.

*793 Primary rights to a third of a parish's fields are
361 believed to reside with the parish church. Ideally, the
423 use of such fields, known as yikeys mariet ("priest's
795 land"), is given to local priests in return for parti-
*[192] cipating in the Masses of the parish church. In prac-
[613] tice, rist-holding ambilineages become associated with specific tracts of yikeys mariet by providing such priests over generations. Occasionally, ambilineage

members are unable to retain their claims to these church lands (which are intimately linked to the acquisition of leadership positions and prestige within the parish) by providing priests from their own ranks. Consequently, substitutes from outside the parish must be obtained. Such is the case with ambilineage I today. According to current allocation of yikeys mariet in Tikurmidir and Lemmariet, ambilineages I and V are each expected to provide three priests for the Mass. Ambilineage V currently provides its three from three ambilineage households of Lemmariet. Ambilineage I, however, currently provides only one risteña priest (a resident of Tikurmidir). Thus, members of ambilineage I using these fields have been obliged to invite two non-risteña priests to take up residence on a portion of these lands, in return for participation in the Mass.

Finally, these hamlets contain three female servants, unrelated to other residents of the parish. In Tikurmidir, there is a single Amhara attached to a household of ambilineage I; in Lemmariet there is a "bariya" in a household of ambilineage I, and another in a household of ambilineage V.

Herbalist Medicine in Tikurmidir and Lemmariet. The herbalist therapies of these two hamlets are described in Table 7. With the use of this information, the following paragraphs will indicate that the professional

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621 into sixty-five named wards (sebekas). The social and demographic character of wards varies considerably, and it is useful to describe them in terms of two contrasting types. At one extreme, the ward resembles a kind
[241] of urban parish. It contains an eponymous Church; and
• [423] a majority of residents are ristenas, members of land-owning ambilineages who support themselves by farming and renting homesteads on their lands. But even these wards contrast with rural parishes on several counts.
*[492] The ward is generally compact in size, and internally
[463] undivided beyond the homestead (bet). Within it live out-landers who work outside the ward in exclusively non-agricultural occupations. Further, while the parish is administered in detail by residents, the ward relies upon non-resident agents of the municipality for its administration.

At the other extreme, are the town's "non-corporate"
[648] wards. During the Italian occupation, several of
[175] Gondar's parish-like wards were sequestered by the invaders as building sites. After liberation, the Imperial government divided each of these wards into tracts, which were deliniated according to the buildings upon them. Tracts were then given as grants (yaribena mariet, "hero's land") to supporters of the government-in-exile, who were often non-residents of Gondar. In time, the pre-war boundaries of such wards were no longer regarded

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621 A Gondar Ward. Gabrael sebeka lies on Gondar's eastern flank, and is typical of those wards which are not given over entirely to talla sellers or tradesmen. [241] Until liberation, it was occupied by risteñas and cul- [423] tivators of timene and church lands (riym). During the [178] last three decades, the ward's character changed greatly, [795] as domiciles for out-landers were built on its fields, [342] and many of its erstwhile peasants took up employment in [463] the town. Today, the ward contains 198 residents. Ten [161] of its forty-four households are headed by Gondar-born 632 people; of these, five were born in Gabrael sebeka it- 621 self. The remaining household heads are a) Amhara from 592 other parts of Begemder (sixteen households), from Gojam (five households), and from Wollo (five households); b) Tigreans (three households); c) local Agaw (two households); d) Shoans (four households); and e) Sankella (one household). On the average, the ward's adult residents who were not born in Gondar have lived fifteen [241] years in this sebeka. With the exception of three house- [793] holds which still depend exclusively on farming, and [463] two local priests (sharing the Mass with priests residing in an adjacent ward), the ward's residents are supported by occupations which depend upon daily contact with [463] people of many other sebekas. In brief, seven household heads are policemen, thirteen hold other government employment, five work as zibañas, eight as wood cutters,

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holds (73% of the total) are without kinship ties to any other of the ward's households. Although many of these residents have kinsmen in other parts of Gondar, few have more than one or two relatives in the town. In addition, because most townfolk rely upon non-agricultural employment for their subsistence needs, there is a concomitant disinterest in ambilineage fields. A consequence is a weakening of the important economic bonds which otherwise link kinsmen to one another.

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Kinship ties are an important means by which the peasant acquires and communicates information necessary for constructing herbalist chains. Since almost every herbalist therapy of the rural parish enjoys its own "pedigree", or trans-generational reputation, the peasant herbalist is provided with means for 1) publicly validating his therapeutic claims, and 2) communicating the existence of the therapy to his potential clients. Potential clients frequently associate the ownership of a famous herbalist therapy with the members of a specific ambilineage, often identifiable by name. Both the ambilineage (whose identity is linked to its fields) and its medical reputation (which is tied to the ambilineage) are attached to a particular location. Since residence is most often viripatrilocal, the transmission of such therapeutic reputations is characterized by an agnatic bias. The male therapist moving to town, like

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Literacy, per se, is not the goal of enrollment, but is perceived rather as a pre-requisite for studying the Gospels (wangel), the psalter (dawiyt), and a variety of prayers, pursuant to participating in the Mass (kidasiy) as an ecclesiastic of the parish.

Within a parish, only a minority of households send boys to the church school; these are generally ristenna households, each sending a single priest-candidate in any one generation. Because attendance at the school precludes shepherding, the common lot of young boys, the student's family must find a substitute shepherd for him; a younger sibling is usually available for this task, but, if not, a collateral or even non-kinsman may be obtained. Indeed, the age at which a boy begins his studies (generally, between seven and thirteen years) is often determined by when this substitute can be found. The parish school is suspended, however, during periods of intensive agricultural activities, of harvesting, threshing, and winnowing.

Although considerations of piety influence a man to seek ordination for his son, self-interest generally dominates. The achievement of priesthood validates a family's claims to church lands (yimoskol mariet). If the neophyte's father is himself a priest, his son's ordination means freedom from bothersome performances in the Mass. If the father is not a priest, but anyway

holds priest land because he is a ristеña of a founding ambilineage of the parish, his son's ordination means that the lands or payments until now turned over to a stranger priest (in lieu of a ristеña priest) can be kept within the family.

The durability of the ties which bind a priest to his natal parish are reinforced by his marriage. Most peasants are married in a "secular union" (yaluwkurban migabat), which excludes neither divorce not extra-marital sexual adventures.[21] The priest, on the other hand, must be married, and it can be only as a "communion marriage" (bikurban migabat), an indissoluble sacrament of the Church which commits the spouses to sexual fidelity and forbids even remarriage. Thus, the priest is cut off from carousing in the talla houses of the town. He must instead confine his comraderie to the courtyard of the parish church, separated from the persons and experiences which might otherwise lead him away from his parish fields.

Thus enrollment in the parish school is conceived

[21]Two other forms of marriage, associated with a man on travels or living in town, are yidomoz migabat (which lasts for a contractual period) and yilijinat (providing only exclusive sexual rights to the woman).